

BEAT

"Pilot"

by

Luke Dornbush

(651) 233-0620
4241 W Kling St #22
Burbank, CA 91505

COLD OPEN

FADE IN:

Images of an idyllic, bustling Midwestern city. In one part of the city is a massive railway center.

MURPHY (V.O.)

Rail City, North Dakota. Home of trains, trains, and more trains. Ya know, there's a saying around here. "If it doesn't go through Rail City, it doesn't exist." Leave it to North Dakotans to be proud of something just passing through. In fact, just about the only thing not just "passing through" is the one thing some people wish would. The Rail City Poochies. That's right. That Poochy.

A clip of a cheesy nineties style PSA with POOCHY THE SAFETY POOCH, a greyhound with an orange construction helmet and a yield sign, helping kids cross the street.

POOCHY

Remember kids, safety first!

The background dissolves into a football stadium. Poochy is now a mascot on the sideline. On the field two players collide at full speed.

MURPHY (V.O.)

Kind of an ironic mascot to have in a game where three hundred pound men crash into each other for sixty minutes.

Clips of violent football collisions, each hit more nerve wrenching than the last.

MURPHY (V.O.)

Then again, it's probably appropriate, given the team. You see, the Poochies suck.

Scoresheets with the Poochies as the losers stack up rapidly.

MURPHY (V.O.)

I mean they really suck.

Magazines naming the Poochies the worst team in professional sports stack up in identical fashion.

The cover of the last magazine on the pile reads "Poochies edge out Washington Generals for Worst Team in America".

MURPHY (V.O.)
Of course, things weren't always
this bad.

Old time football clips play under narration.

MURPHY (V.O.)
Back in the forties and fifties
Rail City was a dynasty.
Championship after championship,
the trophies just piled up. But
every golden age must end and off
the field problems eventually
reared their ugly head. Though,
perhaps not the kind you might
expect.

The clips end with a team photo. The players have war paint on their faces. A banner reads "Rail City Fighting Injuns".

The TEAM'S LOGO is an offensive, cartoonized Native American.

MURPHY (V.O.)
(off photo reveal)
Yea...

Holds on team photo.

MURPHY (V.O.)
Obviously that didn't sit well with
the Native American fans. And so,
after years of protests, management
eventually decided to do the right
thing.

NEWS REEL CLIP - 1958

THE OWNER, 50, stands proudly at a press conference. The room is filled with PRESS and NATIVE AMERICAN REPRESENTATIVES.

OWNER
After years of "exploitation" and
"racist propoganda", Rail City will
finally be free of this horrible
black mark that plagues our
illustrious organization. And so I
present to you for the first
time... the Rail City Fighting
Engines!

A banner drops to reveal the NEW LOGO. It features a train locomotive... and the same cartoonized Native American from the old logo is driving the train.

The room explodes into chaos. In the corner, a NATIVE AMERICAN MAN, in traditional garb, sheds a single tear.

The Owner beams, oblivious to the commotion around him.

MURPHY (V.O.)

Aaaand twenty two years later they changed it again. Of course, after decades of being hassled for political correctness, they took a safer approach this time.

Back to the "Poochy the Safety Pooch" clip.

POOCHY

Safety first!

The clip pauses.

INT. MURPHY'S APARTMENT - MORNING

The clip is on a TV. MURPHY JOHNSON, 32, with short brown hair, sits in a recliner, a remote in his hand.

He gets up and begins to walk around his apartment.

MURPHY

(to the camera)

By the time the second name change came along it was too late. Protests, boycotts and just bad public relations had dropped the franchise into the league basement. And that's where they've been for more than thirty years.

At the door he dons his coat and other cold weather gear.

MURPHY (CONT'D)

So what does any of this have to do with me? Well, I'm the schmuck that gets to report on this God-forsaken team to the rest of the world.

He exits and slams the door on his way out.

END OF COLD OPEN

ACT ONE

EXT. RAIL CITY STAR BUILDING - MORNING

The building has seen better days.

INT. RAIL CITY STAR NEWSROOM

A busy newsroom.

Murphy refreshes his coffee then walks through the office.

MURPHY

(to camera)

The Rail City Star. This newspaper
is the largest periodical in North
Dakota. Which sounds more
impressive than it is.

He pauses at a desk occupied by BOBBY MCCRAY, 26, an African American man whose dorky glasses distract from his boxer's physique.

MURPHY (CONT'D)

(to Bobby)

Morning Bobby.

BOBBY

(in a bad British accent)

Top of the mornin to ya Murph-
aaaaa!

He laughs to himself and goes back to his work.

MURPHY

(to camera)

That's Bobby McCray. Don't let the
accent fool you, he's not really
British. He's another writer here.
Now you might be thinking that he
seems a little off. And you'd be
right.

Photos flash by of a YOUNG BOBBY in every sport imaginable.
In one shot he is on an all black basketball team. In another
he is the only black guy on a swim team.

One picture shows him in a heated debate competition in which
he bears a striking resemblance to Malcolm X.

MURPHY (V.O.)

Growing up, Bobby was all world in everything he touched. And I mean everything. He even played some minor league baseball for a while after high school. But eventually his past caught up with him.

Clips show Bobby getting hit in the head during sporting events in increasingly slapstick ways.

In one clip, a javelin narrowly misses impaling Bobby before he conks his head on the shaft and knocks himself out.

Back in the office Murphy has moved on from the desk.

MURPHY

(to camera)

The blows took their toll and Bobby was forced to retire. Naturally, he went into sports writing and, of course, now he's great at that too.

Murphy stops next to a PLAQUE on the wall.

MURPHY (CONT'D)

Now, you know that guy at your work that you're pretty sure is lying about his age to avoid retirement for a few more years? Well ours is named Max. Max Northington.

The plaque is labeled "Midwest Sports Writer of the Year". Max's name appears next to a dozen wins between 1965 and 1985. There are none since then.

Above it sits a very distinguished looking picture of MAX NORTHINGTON. He has a full head of greying hair and wears an eighties style blazer and tie. Very Midwestern.

MURPHY (CONT'D)

He's a bit of a local legend.

The real Max, 75, walks out of the bathroom a few feet away. The outfit is nearly identical but he is hardly the same man.

He passes Murphy, who reacts to his smell.

MURPHY (CONT'D)

And a bit past his prime.

Max turns back to Murphy, as if he has just noticed him.

MAX

Oh hey, how ya doin there Murphy?

MURPHY

(to Max)

Hi Max.

He hikes up his pants and continues on his way.

MURPHY (CONT'D)

(to camera)

Then there's me. Not much to tell really. Born and raised in Rail City, steady job as the lead sports writer here... and I'd leave this place in a heartbeat for a roll of quarters and a half a chance at a legitimate paper.

He comes to a stop.

MURPHY (CONT'D)

That's about it I guess. A podunk newspaper in some backwater town with only one team and we have three writers to cover it.

An INTERN flashes by and slips Murphy a MEMO. He scans the message and turns in a huff.

He stops and gives the "give me a second" gesture to the camera before he dashes off through the office.

INT. GARY'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

GARY NEVILLE, 49, sits in one of two chairs across from his desk. His hairline is receding and his suit is out of style.

In the other chair sits MELANIE KENDRICK, 26, with sandy blond hair. She's the "girl next door" but tried for a sexy, business look. She kind of pulls it off. Not quite.

Murphy bursts in breathless.

MURPHY

Gary! We need to talk!

(re: the memo)

This is ridiculous! We can't hire another sports writer! We don't even need all the ones we have!

GARY

Oh Murph--

MURPHY

No Gary. We're in a recession. And newspapers get more obsolete every day. Adding unnecessary staff members is incredibly impractical. In fact it's downright irresponsible. If anything we should be cutting back. Now your first instinct is probably gonna be Max. And you've got fine instincts Gary. But you can't fire Max! The people love Max. He's like Rail City's grandpa. He reminds us of the good old days, which unfortunately means abruptly reminding us from time to time of just how racist people were in the good old days. But we love him anyway because he gives us hard candies. Next you'll say, "Well, what about Bobby?". But come on, firing the only black guy in the upper Midwest? Just us talking about it has got to have Jesse Jackson licking his lips somewhere. No, his job is secure. Which brings us finally to me. Good old me. Now I don't want to be fired Gary. Really I don't. But it's clear that you have no other choice here. Don't fret too much, I'm nothing if not a team player. You can make it up to me in my severance check. So shall I go pack my things?

He tries to catch his breath.

GARY

Are you done?

MURPHY

(still short of breath)

Yes! No! Who is this?

GARY

Murphy, this is your new co-worker. Miss Melanie Kendrick.

MELANIE

Oh is he done? I must have dozed off there for a minute.

MURPHY

You just hired her now?

GARY

Yes of course. Didn't you get the memo Murphy?

Murphy holds up the memo that's still in his hand.

MURPHY

Yes I got the- Can someone please remind me again why no one around here uses email?

JAMISON (O.C.)

We move at the speed of news here Johnson!

JAMISON ARCHER, 46, owner of the Star, sits in a chair in the corner. He looks like he hasn't worked a day in his life.

Jamison holds his mug up expectantly.

MURPHY

Well we're print news-

Everyone stares blankly at Murphy, who reluctantly clinks mugs with Jamison. His retort has lost it's edge now.

MURPHY (CONT'D)

We're print news so our news comes out a day after it happens. But hey at least our memos get out fast.

GARY

Melanie just arrived from New York. She has quite an impressive resume.

MELANIE

Yes and you were just about to give me my first assignment weren't you Mr. Neville? Or is there going to be more from Marty here?

Gary laughs as he pulls a notepad out of his desk.

GARY

Why yes, I had a couple ideas.

MURPHY

You're from New York? And you came here? Why?

MELANIE

The short answer? My editor kept giving me fluff pieces.
(MORE)

MELANIE (CONT'D)
Player's wives, uniform fashion,
those kinds of things. I'm a
journalist. I got into this to
cover real news. So I quit.

Gary is furiously crossing things off of his notepad as
Melanie talks.

MURPHY
Ok, but why here speci-

Murphy notices the clock on the wall.

MURPHY (CONT'D)
Oh crap, the press conference. To
be continued.

He dashes out. Gary scans his notepad and crosses off one
more thing.

MELANIE
What are you doing?

GARY
What? Oh nothing. You know what?
You should go with Murphy! To the
press conference thing.

MELANIE
Wait what? Let me see that.

Gary quickly dumps the pad in his desk drawer.

GARY
Nope, no time. Gotta get on the
horn with the... guy and the...
newspaper stuff...

Gary picks up the phone and starts to dial random numbers.

An intern runs past the door holding a MEMO.

MURPHY (O.C.)
(a beat later)
Oh come on!

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

EXT. RAIL CITY STAR PARKING LOT - MORNING

Murphy hurries to his car. Melanie is close behind.

MURPHY

(to camera)

I don't even want to go to this
press conference myself. Now I've
got to babysit the new girl too?

MELANIE

Hey why don't we ride together?
I'll even drive. I don't really
know my way around yet so you could
give me directions to the stadium.

MURPHY

(sotto)

That's what GPS is for.

MELANIE

What?

Murphy fumbles in his pocket for his keys. They aren't there.
They are in the ignition.

Murphy slumps against the door in frustration.

MELANIE (CONT'D)

What did you say?

Murphy checks his watch.

MURPHY

I said that sounds like a great
idea. Let's take your car.

INT. MELANIE'S CAR - LATER

They ride a moment in silence.

MURPHY

Ya know, I think maybe we got off
to a bad start back there?

MELANIE

Yes we did.

MURPHY

Well yea, but I'm thinking maybe we should try to make a fresh start here since we're gonna be co-workers and all. Also you're my ride and I'd hate to get left behind.

Murphy chuckles awkwardly at his attempted joke. Melanie considers as they arrive at the stadium and pull into a spot.

He extends his hand.

MURPHY (CONT'D)

So what do ya say? Fresh start?

MELANIE

Sure. Why not? Fresh start. Starting now.

MURPHY

Deal.

Murphy tries to open his door but it won't budge. Melanie has pulled tight to the adjacent vehicle.

She laughs as she gets out. There are no cars on her side.

Murphy crawls awkwardly out of Melanie's door and runs to catch up to her.

MURPHY (CONT'D)

Hey! You did that on purpose!

MELANIE

It's certainly possible.

MURPHY

I thought we had a fresh start!

MELANIE

We do. But I was already parked.

INT. STADIUM PRESS ROOM - LATER

A few writers and reporters wait for the conference to start.

In the front, a YOUNG MAN spots Murphy and waves excitedly. Murphy pretends not to notice.

MELANIE

I think that kid is waving at you.

MURPHY

No, I think he's waving at that guy.

Murphy points to a random PASSERBY.

PASSERBY

What's that? Someone's waving at me?

YOUNG MAN

Murphy! Hey Murphy! I saved you a seat!

MURPHY

(to Passerby)

Oh yea. But he's gone now.

PASSERBY

Damn! He wasn't looking to buy deer urine was he?

MURPHY

I'm sorry?

PASSERBY

Ya know, deer urine. For huntin'.

MURPHY

Uh. Ya know, it's weird but that didn't come up.

PASSERBY

Oh. Do you want to buy some deer urine?

MELANIE

What did he just say?

MURPHY

(to Passerby)

No, no, we're all stocked thanks.

(sotto to Melanie)

Go!

They arrive at the front where ANDREW, 19, sits.

YOUNG MAN/ANDREW

Hey Murphy! Who's your friend?

MURPHY

Andy, this is Melanie. Melanie, Andy.

ANDREW

Andrew. Melanie. What a lovely name. It's a pleasure to meet you.

Andrew takes Melanie's hand and kisses it.

MELANIE

Whoa! Hey. You just go for it huh?

ANDREW

I know what I like when I see it.

MURPHY

Andy used to be an intern for us. Now he runs his own blog or something.

ANDREW

Oh Murphy, you flatter me.

Andrew steps uncomfortably close to Melanie.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

So Melanie. You new in town?

MELANIE

Yes. I am.

ANDREW

Well let me give you my number and you can let me know if you need someone to show you around.

MELANIE

A very generous offer I'm sure, but I wouldn't want to keep you out past your curfew.

ANDREW

Oh, that's not a problem. My parents totally let me stay out as late as I want. I just have to check in with them when I get in.

MURPHY

It's starting.

OWNER JR, identical to the original Owner, enters and walks to the podium. He is tailed by a MOUSEY ASSISTANT.

OWNER JR

Thank you all for coming on such short notice. I will try to keep this brief.

(MORE)

OWNER JR (CONT'D)

When my grandfather started this franchise, they called him crazy. They said North Dakota is a wasteland of plains and fields. Flyover country. You'll never be able to make money there...

The speech continues. Melanie leans over to Murphy.

MELANIE

So what do you think they called this press conference for?

MURPHY

Who knows? It's probably just a PR move or something. It's the offseason so they just want to keep their name in the news.

MELANIE

With a name like the Poochies, you'd think they'd want to keep it out of the news.

They chuckle discreetly. Their eyes meet for a moment.

OWNER JR

They all said we'd regret starting a team in Rail City. And you know what? They were right.

This catches their attention.

OWNER JR (CONT'D)

That's why I'm here today to announce that the Poochies will be relocating immediately. That is all. Thank you.

Owner Jr leaves the podium without taking any questions.

Murphy and Melanie sit in stunned silence. Andrew leans over and slips his business card into Melanie's coat pocket.

INT. MELANIE'S CAR - LATER

Murphy and Melanie are still stunned.

MURPHY

Who would want the Poochies?

INT. RAIL CITY STAR NEWSROOM - AFTERNOON

The room is chaotic. Phones ring. People scramble.

Melanie can't handle it and wanders off. Before Murphy can follow her, Bobby runs up to him.

MURPHY

What's going on Bobby?

BOBBY

Andrew tweeted from the press conference. It's just exploded. The phones are ringing off the hook. I've gotten hundreds of emails in the last ten minutes alone.

MURPHY

Seriously?

Murphy takes out his Blackberry to check his emails.

SECRETARY

Mr. Johnson, I have someone for you on line one. They say it's urgent.

MURPHY

Ok, tell them to hold on a minute.

Max runs up as if he has important news.

MAX

They tried to move the team once before ya know. Back in the sixties. Richard O'Shaughnessy was the quarterback back in those days.

MURPHY

What? That's great Max.

MAX

He runs a bed and breakfast in Saskatchewan now.

(sotto)

That's in Canada.

MURPHY

Yea Max. I know. That's great really. Not the best time.

Gary ambles up to them.

GARY
Ah, my sports staff. Alright. What
kind of phone is that? A
blackberry?

MURPHY
Yes.

GARY
Nice. Good times. So, listen, I
need to see you guys in my office.

MURPHY
What about Melanie?

GARY
I sent her the message. But we can
start without her.

An intern runs by with a memo as they enter Gary's office.

INT. GARY'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

They all disperse. Gary sits at his desk.

GARY
So, I wanted to talk to you all
about the implications this
announcement will have for our
paper.

Melanie arrives and stands in the doorway.

GARY (CONT'D)
Now, no decisions have been made.
This is all very preliminary. I
just wanted to give you all fair
warning. I've talked with Mr.
Archer, and there are going to be
cutbacks if the Poochies do go
through with this move. We will not
be able to keep all of you. Do any
of you have any questions?

BOBBY
Will you be able to keep anyone?

GARY
I can't comment on that. That's
something that we will have to look
at in the com--

MAX

Quit trying to spin us Gary! As our friend. Are any of us going to be able to keep our jobs?

GARY

As your friend... You all might want to make sure your resumes are up to date.

Bobby is not handling this well. Murphy is excited.

MURPHY

What kind of severance package would we be looking at?

GARY

Well you all have been with us for many years so I'm sure we can set you up with a pretty generous severance. But Miss Kendrick...

MELANIE

I just started here. I'd get nothing.

GARY

Yes I'm afraid so. Now if there are no more questions, I suggest we all get back to work. This is a big story and you still have deadlines.

They all shuffle out.

INT. RAIL CITY STAR NEWSROOM - CONTINUOUS

The guys return to their desks. Melanie goes to her office.

Murphy hesitates, then goes to Max. He pulls a jar of urine out of his coat pocket and puts it on Max's desk.

MURPHY

Here.

(he hesitates)

Scott says hi.

Murphy goes after Melanie. Bobby stares at the jar.

MAX

I'm going hunting this weekend.

BOBBY

It's not deer season Max.

INT. MELANIE'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Melanie is already at her empty desk, head down. Packing boxes are scattered around the room.

MURPHY

Hey, how come you get an office?

Melanie discreetly wipes her eyes before she looks up.

MURPHY (CONT'D)

Are you ok?

MELANIE

What? No, yea I'm fine.

MURPHY

You are?

MELANIE

Yep. Totally fine.

MURPHY

Ok, well if you're--

MELANIE

But if I weren't fine, it would be totally understandable right? I mean, it's not like I just uprooted my entire life, left everyone I know behind and moved to the middle of nowhere only to lose my new job on my first day right? Cuz that would suck. I mean that would really be pretty awful.

She starts to laugh really hard. Too hard. Murphy joins in uncomfortably.

After a moment Murphy stops. Melanie continues to force her laughter, now on the verge of tears.

MELANIE (CONT'D)

Murphy, I need you to keep laughing with me or leave right now because I'm not going to let myself cry in front of you.

Murphy leaves.

INT. RAIL CITY STAR NEWSROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Murphy returns to his desk. A blinking light catches his eye.

MURPHY

Oh crap!

He picks up the phone.

MURPHY (CONT'D)

I'm sorry to keep you waiting--

MYSTERY VOICE

(on the phone)

Mr. Johnson?

MURPHY

Yea that's me. Look, I'm kind of in the middle of something here--

MYSTERY VOICE

Mr. Johnson, I'm afraid we have a bit of an emergency and we need your help.

MURPHY

I'm sorry, you need my what?

MYSTERY VOICE

Come down to the stadium immediately. We have a lot to discuss.

The phone disconnects and Murphy is left perplexed.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. STADIUM OWNER'S OFFICE - LATE AFTERNOON

Murphy is shown into a large office by the Mousey Assistant.

Owner Jr stands near a giant window overlooking the field. WORKERS stack GIANT LETTERS in one corner of the room, but only vowels.

OWNER JR
(to the workers)
And you're sure that's all of them?

MOUSEY ASSISTANT
Sir, Murphy Johnson is here to see you.

OWNER JR
Ah, Mr. Johnson. Thank you for coming so quickly. Please have a seat.

MURPHY
You know there are other ways to get in contact with someone besides creepy, mysterious phone calls. You've been watching too many spy movies.

Owner Jr pours two glasses of scotch, from a half empty bottle, then downs each of them in turn.

OWNER JR
Can I offer you anything?

MURPHY
No thank you, I'm actually working right now. But you seem to be doing just fine without me.

OWNER JR
That's actually why I called you down here.

Murphy waits expectantly. Owner Jr pours another scotch.

MURPHY

Well I love watching a man drink
his liver into submission in the
middle of the afternoon as much as
the next guy but I am on a
deadline. So if there's nothing
else...

Murphy stands and starts to leave.

OWNER JR

(suddenly lucid)

Is this off the record?

MURPHY

What?

OWNER JR

Can you promise me that what I'm
about to tell you will stay
strictly between us?

MURPHY

Absolutely not.

OWNER JR

I'm going to take that as a yes. It
turns out that my announcement this
morning may have been a little bit
premature.

MURPHY

Premature how? You said it was a
done deal.

OWNER JR

That is what I was led to believe.

FLASHBACK - INT. BAR - TWO NIGHTS EARLIER

Owner Jr is plastered. Next to him is MAYOR BLOOM, who is
barely conscious.

OWNER JR

To Baltimore!

BLOOM

To Baltimore!

They finish their drinks.

BLOOM

I told you man. You drink with the
Mayor, you're gonna have the time
of your freaking life. We should
totally do this all the time.

OWNER JR

Yes. Yes! That is a great idea. I'm writing that down.

He pulls out his PDA.

OWNER JR (CONT'D)

Totally do this ALL the time. See, now it's in my calendar. Isn't technology awesome?

BLOOM

Oh dude! I just had the best idea! Like ever!

OWNER JR

What? What is it? Tell me. Tell me now!

BLOOM

Shhh! Shhh! You should move your team here to Baltimore! Then we could do this like every night!

OWNER JR

That is a great idea! Then we really could do this all the time! Those stinkers in Rail City don't appreciate me anyways. I'm totally doing it!

BLOOM

Excellent man. Do it. Do it...

Mayor Bloom passes out on the bar.

INT. STADIUM OWNER'S OFFICE - PRESENT DAY

OWNER JR

But apparently a drunken gentlemen's agreement doesn't mean what it used to.

MURPHY

Wow. That's an amazing story for, oh so many reasons.

OWNER JR

So now we're in a bit of a pickle. It seems we've upset a few people with our announcement this morning.

MURPHY
I think that's safe to say.

EXT. STADIUM PARKING LOT - LATE AFTERNOON

Protestors have gathered outside the stadium.

A group walks up with GIANT LETTERS "F C K T H P C H S"

PROTESTOR #1
What the hell man?

PROTESTOR #2
They were out of vowels.

INT. STADIUM OWNER'S OFFICE

MURPHY
So why don't you just tell them the truth?

OWNER JR
You know they're never gonna forgive us after this.

MURPHY
(to camera)
They won't. I went back and listened to the part of the press conference I zoned on. He said some pretty offensive things about North Dakotans. And goats. I don't think they'll forgive him either.
(to Owner Jr)
Well so far this sounds an awful lot like your problem. Now don't get me wrong, I love it when problems aren't mine. It's one of my favorite things in fact. But I don't think you'd have called me down here if you didn't want to make this my problem somehow. So why don't you get to it.

OWNER JR
We need you to write a piece for us in the Star. We need you to get the public back on our side or we'll never recover. And then we really will have to move. A team can't survive where they aren't wanted. I need you to save the team.

MURPHY

No. No way. You guys stuck your necks out on this and you want me to give you a stay of execution in the court of public opinion? Well I'm not gonna do it. I don't write propaganda.

OWNER JR

We just want you to write an editorial piece--

MURPHY

You want me to sacrifice my integrity to serve your needs.

OWNER JR

No Mr. Johnson, don't you see? This works out to your benefit too. This is your chance to be a hero in this town. You'll be the man that saved professional sports in Rail City.

MURPHY

If I wanted to be a hero I wouldn't have become a journalist. Why don't you ask one of the other writers? You know we have four of them now.

OWNER JR

No I didn't. Really? Four? Seems like a bit much.

MURPHY

I know right?

OWNER JR

But don't you see that's exactly why it has to be you. No one takes Max Northington seriously anymore and no one knows who those other two guys even are.

Murphy pours some scotch and drinks it as he considers.

MURPHY

I have to go.

OWNER JR

Does that mean you'll help us?

Murphy hurries out.

OWNER JR (CONT'D)
Murphy!?

Owner Jr finishes off the bottle and slumps in his chair.

OWNER JR (CONT'D)
(to glass)
I think I'm gonna miss you the most.

INT. MURPHY'S CAR - EVENING

Murphy gets into his car.

MURPHY
(to camera)
I had an extra pair in my desk.
Cards on the table... this wasn't
the first time I've locked my keys
in my car at work.

He starts his car and begins to drive.

MURPHY (CONT'D)
(to camera)
I know, I know. But, this is a
great opportunity for me. My big
chance. The Poochies leave, there's
nothing to keep me here. I take my
severance pay and make a go of it
in real city like Chicago or New
York. No more excuses.

He focuses on the road again.

MURPHY (CONT'D)
(to self)
A great opportunity for me...

INT. RAIL CITY STAR NEWSROOM - NIGHT

The office is nearly empty. Murphy walks past Bobby's desk.

MURPHY
Hey Bobby.

He doesn't respond. On his screen is an open document. The top is labeled "Job Ideas". The rest is blank.

Murphy continues towards Melanie's office.

MAX (O.C.)
Hey ya Murphy!

MURPHY
Hey Max.

MAX
Quite a crazy day, huh? Ya know it
reminds me of a time back in
seventy four-

MURPHY
That's great Max. I'm sure I'll
read all about it tomorrow.

Murphy reaches Melanie's door. Max is left alone.

INT. MELANIE'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Melanie is nowhere to be seen. Murphy is just about to leave
when he spots her legs on the floor sticking out from behind
her desk.

MURPHY
Melanie?

MELANIE
(distant)
Huh?

Her hair is down and it's clear she's been crying.

She is absolutely stunning.

MURPHY
Melanie.

MELANIE
Yea?

MURPHY
Why are you on the floor?

MELANIE
I'm... It's just something I used
to do when I was a kid. I lay down
and try to look at the world
differently. Like, what the world
would look like if everything
suddenly got flipped upside down...

She sits up, suddenly back in the moment.

MELANIE (CONT'D)
Turns out it sucks.

Murphy sits down next to her.

MURPHY
I don't know about that. This could be a great opportunity for you... for everyone. For a fresh start.

MELANIE
This is my opportunity for a fresh start. Or it was.

MURPHY
Fresh starts are overrated. How about that great job you left back in New York? Maybe they'll take you back--

MELANIE
I didn't leave that job. I was fired. I made all that other stuff up.

MURPHY
What?

MELANIE
I made up a story about one of the athletes, I was caught and they fired me. That's it. There's nothing back there for me. This was actually the only paper in the entire country that would even give me an interview.

Murphy takes this in. She lies back down.

MELANIE (CONT'D)
God, I must look like such a mess right now.

MURPHY
No.

Murphy lies down next to her.

MURPHY (CONT'D)
(after a beat)
You sure lie a lot don't you?

MELANIE

My resume says that I covered the
Yankees for The New Yorker.

They both burst out in laughter.

INT. RAIL CITY STAR NEWSROOM - LATER

Murphy types furiously at his desk in the dark.

MURPHY (V.O.)

...I remember going to my first
Poochies game at the old stadium
when I was twelve years old. My dad
took me.

People reading the newspaper at breakfast, on the bus, etc.

MURPHY (V.O.)

We weren't very well off in those
days but we saved for months and we
went for my birthday. In the twenty
years since that day, I don't think
I've ever been that excited again.
I remember the feel of the stadium,
like there was electricity in the
air. The smell of the grass. The
roar of the crowd and the joy of a
hard fought victory. It was the
only game they won that year but it
didn't matter. I was hooked. My dad
and I had our troubles over the
years but I will always have that
memory. You wouldn't have guessed
it from looking at him, but he was
a pretty wise man. He told me once
that sports bring out the best in
all of us. Passion. Creativity.
Honor. Perseverance. Teamwork...
Sacrifice. Our team represents all
of us and they are ultimately a
symbol of the best parts of us.
Those words have stuck with me,
through all of the failure and
cynicism that only comes from years
of disappointment. Now is your time
to be heard Rail City. Get out on
the streets, call into the radio
stations. Let's show the owner of
this franchise that the Poochies
belong here in Rail City...

INT. RAIL CITY STAR NEWSROOM - MORNING

Murphy arrives. There's an extra energy to the room today.

Bobby and Max joke around at Bobby's desk.

MURPHY
Good morning guys.

BOBBY
Murphy! Good morning buddy.

MURPHY
Max.

Max startles Murphy with a big bear hug.

MAX
You smell like a new beginning.

MURPHY
Thanks Max, whatever that means.
You smell like a... like a urinal?

MAX
Oh, that's just my morning breath.

MURPHY
Please let go of me.

Max returns to his desk, smiling ear to ear.

BOBBY
Hey man, that was a great article
you wrote. That story about your
dad was really touching.

MURPHY
Oh. Yea thanks.

BOBBY
I mean it man. This city has Poochy
fever this morning and it's all
because of you. You're like the
Typhoid Mary of Poochy fever.

He stands on his desk.

BOBBY (CONT'D)
Hey everyone! Murphy is Typhoid
Mary! Stay away from him or you'll
catch the fever!

MURPHY
 (to camera)
 No good deed goes unpunished.
 (to Bobby)
 Um. Thanks? Have you seen Melanie?

BOBBY
 No I haven't seen her today. Oh by the way, Gary wants you down at the stadium. The team is holding another press conference in like, five minutes ago.

MURPHY
 Yea, I suspected they might. Tell him I'm on my way.

Murphy walks away.

BOBBY
 Hey, Typhoid Murphy! That so works. Max!

EXT. STADIUM PARKING LOT - MORNING

Murphy pulls into the stadium parking lot. Nearby a crowd of fans hold up letters that spell "W L V T H P C H S".

INT. STADIUM PRESS ROOM

Murphy walks into the press room. It's packed.

OWNER JR
 The outpouring of support from the fans of the team has been overwhelming and deeply moving. As a result we've been left with no choice but to reconsider our position. Therefore, it is my privilege to announce to you all that the Poochies will be remaining in Rail City for the foreseeable future. Thank you. And go Poochies!

Murphy spots Melanie sneaking out. He hurries after her.

EXT. STADIUM PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

MURPHY
 Hey! Wait up!

Melanie stops in her tracks. Busted.

MURPHY (CONT'D)

Melanie?

Melanie takes a breath before turning to face him.

They slowly move closer as they talk.

MELANIE

Hey.

MURPHY

What are you doing here?

MELANIE

I was just- Gary sent me. For the news conference.

MURPHY

Oh.

MELANIE

Yea. So Bobby tells me you saved the team?

MURPHY

(laughs)

Oh, yea. That. He thinks I'm some kind of hero or something.

MELANIE

Well he thinks you saved his job.

MURPHY

He also thinks I'm Typhoid Mary so I wouldn't read too much into it.

MELANIE

Yea he mentioned that.

MURPHY

I was just doing my job. It's not a big deal.

MELANIE

Well it's a big deal to him.

They are nearly touching now.

MELANIE (CONT'D)

(a beat)

I should probably be going. Gotta get back to the office.

MURPHY

Yea. Me too.

Murphy and Melanie awkwardly go their separate ways.

Melanie can't stop smiling but risks a glance over her shoulder as she approaches her car.

She reaches in her pocket and is baffled to find the business card Andrew slipped her. Off her reaction:

END OF ACT THREE

TAG

INT. MAX'S KITCHEN - VERY EARLY MORNING

It's still dark as Max walks groggily up to his fridge, opens it and begins to grope around inside blindly.

His hand finds the jar of urine. He opens it and starts to drink it. After a couple deep gulps he does a spit take and is wide awake.

He wipes his mouth and replaces the jar in the fridge.

MAX

I can't believe I wasted all those
years drinking coffee in the
morning.

He leaves the kitchen.

FADE OUT.

END OF SHOW