

VILLAGE GAZETTE

Written by

Shelly Gossman & Amber Ruffin

EXT. GRANDMA MAYBELLE'S HOUSE - MORNING

AMBER (30's, cute as a dang button!) steps out of a brightly painted Victorian house. She smiles and takes a deep breath.

AMBER  
Good morning, Benson!

MAYBELLE (late 60's, regal) steps out and hands Amber a cake carrier. Amber puts it carefully in her bike basket.

AMBER (CONT'D)  
Thanks Gramby! Bye!

She kisses her on the cheek and puts on a floral bike helmet.

MAYBELLE  
Don't wear that. It'll smash your hair.

AMBER  
Sorry. I don't want to die today!

MAYBELLE  
If I ever smash my hair you can go ahead and kill me.

Amber pedals off as music starts to play.

EXT. BENSON MAIN STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Amber bikes through town. She passes kids en route to school.

AMBER  
Three times three? The capital of California?

KIDS  
Nine!/Sacramento!

AMBER  
Your delicious brains will be the future of the world!

As Amber continues to ride, she sings a little ditty.

AMBER (CONT'D)  
BENSON'S WHERE YOU WANT TO BE! THIS TOWN HAS ELECTRICITY! IT'S BENSON!

She points to an OLD COUPLE having coffee on their porch. They sing reply:

OLD COUPLE  
BENSON!



They do a handshake that ends in them fake dunking into trash cans. Amber opens the cake and cuts it. Zak's concerned.

ZAK

Last time we got Grandma Maybelle's bourbon coffee cake was when you told us they weren't gonna fix the air-conditioning for the entire month of July.

AMBER

And that turned out fun! Everyone got a church fan and we all found out we look good in tank tops!

DAVIS (60s, a mess of a man) lumbers in. He's eating a fast food breakfast burrito and does a lazy handshake with Amber.

AMBER (CONT'D)

Daisy head Davis!

DAVIS

Did you hear Bobby Lupton is closing down Lupton Hardware?

ZAK

Aw, I'm gonna have to buy my screws somewhere that doesn't mix all the sizes together in a dusty bin.

AMBER

The hunt is part of the fun! I talked to Bob and we're gonna do a full front page tribute.

Amber hands Davis a slice of cake. He furrows his brow.

DAVIS

Uh-oh. What's the bad news?

Amber pulls her chair to the middle of the desks and playfully spins in a circle.

AMBER

Weeee! We have fun here don't we? But we've all been doubling up on duties to keep this paper going.

JASMINE

Except Davis.

DAVIS

Except me. But my divorce...

ZAK

It's been eight years, Davis.

AMBER

The good news, chickadees, is we are getting a reporter from the New York Star! He's won an American Press award, Martinez Prizes, and the Pulitzer!

Jasmine is listening and typing away.

ZAK

Why does that sound like good news?

AMBER

Because it is!

Jasmine has found him on Google.

JASMINE

No! It's Randall Westinghouse, that guy who made up the story about that eight year old heroin addict. You can't hire him, he's a liar!

AMBER

Alleged liar. And, I didn't hire him. Our fair and mighty owners did.

DAVIS

Teri and Jake? Why?

AMBER

Probably because he has a Pulitzer!  
(miming lasers)  
Pew. Pew. Pew. Pew-litzer!

JASMINE

A revoked Pulitzer!

AMBER

Okay fine... he's their nephew.

ZAK

I knew it. This is like the time they made us put their dog in the paper to "boost his confidence."

AMBER

And it worked! You can't match the prance of that cocky one eyed pug.

DAVIS

It definitely worked. He always corners me in the kitchen.

ZAK

Because you always smell like meat.

DAVIS

Ha! It's true. Whenever I get a whiff of myself it makes me hungry.

AMBER

This Randall guy says he didn't lie. He swears there's a child heroin addict out there and I want to believe that she's-- wait, never mind. Let's assume he's a good guy.

ZAK

Have you seen any of his interviews? He's a bad guy. He called Don Lemon an "idiot."

AMBER

Par-Don Lemonade? My ageless CNN boyfriend? That's tough. I need to breathe into that.

(takes a deep breath)

Guys, this is a broken man, not a bad man. And Benson is going to save him. Just like it saved a shy fourteen year old orphan with acne and an obsession with crop tops (I did look good though. Drew in abs with eyeliner pencil.) Point is, this town has the power to heal.

Music started playing midway through her speech.

AMBER (CONT'D)

Dang. I'm inspirational. I just gave myself goosebumps.

ZAK

That's because I played inspirational music on my phone.

AMBER

Thank you! Hit me with it one more time.

He plays it again. Amber speaks even more energetically.

AMBER (CONT'D)

Soon, we will have a new soldier in our ranks. A fighter, nay, a hero-

JASMINE

A liar.

AMBER

An alleged liar.

**MAIN TITLES**

**ACT ONE**EXT. VILLAGE GAZETTE SIDEWALK - LATER

The staff waits as TERI and JAKE REVORD (50's) pull up in a giant pick up truck, think Catherine O'Hara and Fred Willard. They honk their horn which plays "Only The Good Die Young."

TERI

Attention please! Announcing the latest addition to the Village Gazette, my baby nephew, he has an outie belly button -- Randall Westinghouse!

Teri opens the door with flourish and RANDALL (early 40's, think Adam Scott) struggles to get out of the backseat.

RANDALL

(irritated)  
Hi everyone.

JAKE/ (RANDALL)

When this kid came to us with his career in the dang gutter, crying. (I wasn't crying.) Weeping. (Nope.) We looked into his sad eyes and said, "Welp, here's another wounded bird for us to save."

TERI

We love saving wounded birds!

JAKE

Which is great 'cause our dog loves wounding birds!

TERI

Don't tell a lot of people this, but when the Archibald twins burnt down the middle school theater, wanna guess who rebuilt it?

RANDALL

You two?

JAKE

No! We're terrible at construction. But we did pay some brawny fellas to build it. It's got recliner seating with drink cup holders!

Zak turns to Amber and says under his breath:

ZAK

Yep. The middle school has plush seats for the one play they do every year but they have zero algebra teachers. They have to Skype in a guy from Omaha.

AMBER

Stop judging how they philanthropize.

ZAK

Fun word.

AMBER (CONT'D)

Fun word.

JAKE

We're famous in Benson for being champions of lost causes, Randy.

AMBER

So you prefer Randy to Randall?

RANDALL

Definitely not.

TERI

We gotta skat-doodle. We are on the all syrup diet. It's where instead of eating you chug maple syrup and I have a hankerin' for a swig of Hungry Jack.

She gets back in the truck. Jake hands Randall a to-go salad.

JAKE

Bud, we got you a salad for lunch.  
(then to the staff)  
Gang, you'll make him feel at home?

AMBER

Absolutely! We're all excited to have him here! C'mon, Randy...

RANDALL

Randall.

AMBER

Randa Panda.

RANDALL

Randall.

AMBER

Randall, come on in and make yourself at home!



INT. VILLAGE GAZETTE BULLPEN - CONTINUOUS

The staff watches as Randall takes in his new, dingy offices.

RANDALL

Where's my office?

AMBER

There are no offices, but it's way more fun this way. Like when someone accidentally cusses we have to do calisthenics led by Jasmine -- she was in the Air Force so her form can be intimidating. We also have three o'clock trivia. Today's category is Geena Davis. You can bet up to five dollars.

Jasmine extends a trivia jar to him. He shakes his head "no."

RANDALL

What if I need privacy?

DAVIS

You can take personal calls in Teri and Jake's office like I should've when my doctor called to tell me I had Shingles. Nothing to be ashamed of, not like herpes, but Jasmine's still grossed out by me.

JASMINE

I'm grossed out by all humans. We're germ factories and Bill Gates says the superbug is coming for us.

She squirts her hands with sanitizer.

AMBER

Your desk is the one by the radiator. It's the best one come February on these cold plains.

RANDALL

I won't be here in February. God help me, I'll be working at a real paper in a city where people know iceberg doesn't count as salad.

Randall tosses the salad from Jake in the trash, crosses to his desk, puts on headphones and turns his back to them.

ZAK

Told ya. Bad guy.

INT. NEWSPAPER WINDOW - LATER

PASTOR TRISH (40's, think Paula Pell) is setting up homemade crafts/art. Amber crawls in holding a fast food bag.

AMBER

Hey! I only said you could use our window for the art fair if you put your art in front.

PASTOR TRISH

Nobody wants to see my art. Pastors are supposed to go home at night, read the bible, and eat bland soups. Not paint.

AMBER

Since when do you care what most pastor's do? You showed a drag queen documentary at church once.

PASTOR TRISH

Golly, that Venus Extravaganza stole our hearts. Didn't she?

AMBER

I'm in love with her.

PASTOR TRISH

Look, I organize the fair. I can't put my art in front.

AMBER

Well, I can and I will.

She rifles through the art to find Trish's paintings.

PASTOR TRISH

How's it going with Mr. Fancy Pointy Leather Shoes?

AMBER

He's pretty grumpy but I'm going to warm him up. I got Grinders to share. Who can resist Benson's best loose meat sandwiches?

Amber grabs a painting of Main Street and holds it up.

AMBER (CONT'D)

This is my favorite painting of yours. It's truly beautiful.

Amber places it in front and leaves. It's good, but Pastor Trish immediately puts it in the back.

INT. VILLAGE BULLPEN - MOMENTS LATER

Amber approaches Randall's desk and hands him a sandwich.

AMBER

These are Benson's famous Turkey Grinders. Basically a sloppy joe with no slop and turkey instead of beef. Invented by a local gal who was gonna make tacos, had no shells, shoved the meat on a bun.

RANDALL

A real Thomas Edison, huh?

AMBER

But these are way better than lightbulbs. They have taco salt.

Randall takes a tentative bite of the sandwich.

RANDALL

Wow. That's very dry.

AMBER

Yep. They're like beer or olives, you choke down a few to look cool and then suddenly you're like oh-- I like these now.

RANDALL

Well at the risk of not looking cool, I'm going to pass.

AMBER

I'll recycle it.

She holds it out and Davis snatches it. She attempts a fist bump/handshake with Randall, but it awkwardly fizzles out.

RANDALL

I see what you're doing, and you don't have to try so hard. I'm not gonna be happy here, and it's not your job to make me happy.

AMBER

It's impossible not to be happy in Benson.

Randall goes back to his work. A backscratcher with a tiny hand comes into frame. It scratches him.

AMBER (O.C.) (CONT'D)  
Scratcha scratcha scracha!

Randall stands and starts packing up his laptop.

RANDALL  
I'm just gonna go to my fleabag motel and find my first story. Hopefully there's a Flint water situation here, or a missing teen, or a missing pregnant lady with a cop husband...

AMBER  
There isn't. But we do have the World's Biggest Coffee Table. Actually, we were just beat out by a town in Sweden but we still have the biggest coaster. Like coaster for a mug, not a roller coaster--

RANDALL  
Kill me.

AMBER  
That'd be a juicy story, but you couldn't write it cause you'd be dead!

RANDALL  
See you tomorrow.

Randall exits. She calls after.

AMBER  
(slightly defeated)  
Yep. Sure. Take the rest of the day. Get settled.

ZAK  
Your brow furrowed. I've never seen you do that. You're scaring me.

AMBER  
No. I'm fine. That was a squint. Not a furrow. I was trying to see something small... way over there.

ZAK  
Really? What are you trying to see over there?

AMBER

There's a ladybug... with a parasol-

ZAK

Your dream tattoo is crawling on our wall? No. That was a real furrow. You're scared.

AMBER

Well, he's not just a hurt man who needs to be buoyed out of his darkness. He's one of those sad people that wants everyone else to be sad too. He wants to find a story that will hurt Benson. Good luck bud, there's nothing bad here.

DAVIS

What about the Archibald twins?

AMBER

Those kids are monsters!

They're all shocked she said it.

DAVIS

This guy is changing you.

AMBER

I'm stronger than the darkness. Zak?

Zak plays inspirational music on his phone.

AMBER (CONT'D)

What I meant was: The Archibald twins are hardy... capable stock. I can't build a fire, I'd die on a desert island. Not those two, they'd be alive *and* warm.

JASMINE

And they'd have meat. Remember when they BBQ'd the cemetery pond swans?

She's grossed out but tries to rally.

AMBER

Aww-wesome! See? They're survivalists... Yep... Survivalists. It'll be fine.

Off Jasmine and Zak's concerned looks...

**END ACT ONE**

**ACT TWO**INT. BULLPEN - THE NEXT DAY

Amber taps out "Axel F" on a toy xylophone.

JASMINE

(to Randall)

That's our cue to huddle up.

Randall hesitantly follows as the staff huddles up.

AMBER

As most of you know, Lupton Hardware is closing. After one hundred and two years of serving the Benson community.

(then, to Randall)

Bob Lupton is an amazing guy. He pickles his own pickles, he named his car Wanda, he's very fun and very Benson.

JASMINE

You can always hear Wanda coming. Hasn't had the muffler replaced since '81.

AMBER

I'm going to run a huge front page article on the history of the store and I want Randall to write it.

The staff applauds for Randall. Except Davis.

RANDALL

But I'm working on a piece about Mesothelioma. There's a higher percentage in Sarpy County-- wondering if it's linked to the rendering plant.

AMBER

No way! I've never known anyone in Benson with Mesothelioma.

DAVIS

What about your uncle Danny?

AMBER

Nope. Wasn't Mesothelioma. That was meso...po...tamia?

RANDALL  
Mesopotamia? The ancient near east?

AMBER  
No... A different one. Anyhow,  
congratulations, this will be a  
very fun first assignment.

RANDALL  
(unenthused)  
Can't wait.

INT. VILLAGE GAZETTE - KITCHEN - LATER

Amber, Jasmine, and Zak are making their lunches.

DAVIS  
If you're going to fire me, just do  
it. Don't string me along and make  
a fool of me.

AMBER  
Davis, I know you usually do the  
town history pieces but I need  
Randall to do this one. It'll make  
him fall in love with Benson,  
instead of trying to ruin it.

DAVIS  
I have given my whole self to this  
paper since 1975.

ZAK  
Whole self? You fall asleep on your  
keyboard multiple times a day and  
we count the number of key beeps it  
takes to wake you up.

AMBER  
Zak, don't judge Daisy Head. And  
Daisy Head, don't pretend to be sad  
about this article. You hate Bob  
Lupton.

DAVIS  
He introduced my wife to the priest  
that seduced her and took her off  
to that llama country.

JASMINE  
Peru? Those are alpacas. And your  
wife isn't in love with the priest.  
She's in love with God.

DAVIS  
They're all in cahoots.

Fun word.                      AMBER                      Fun word.                      ZAK

AMBER  
Davis, I need you to cover Family News this week. Irma Matthews saved a baby bunny. She's bottle feeding it and crocheted a onesie to keep it warm, so take Zak with you to do photos.

DAVIS  
I don't want that story. Irma always tells me I'm fat and-

Maybelle enters.

MAYBELLE  
You're not fat, you're Winter-ready.

DAVIS  
Miss Maybelle, thanks for the coffee cake. I um, I ate it?

Davis blushes and backs out the room, flustered.

MAYBELLE  
I surely do make that man nervous.

AMBER  
I can't do lunch today. I'm trying to save Benson from--

MAYBELLE  
I'm not here for you.  
(turns to Jasmine)  
Miss Jasmine, you'll have to charge me extra for my personal ad this week. It exceeds forty words.

ZAK/JASMINE  
Read it!/Please let her read it?!

Amber shrugs, "Fine." Maybelle loves the attention. She clears her throat and performs the following:

MAYBELLE  
I am a septuagenarian with the spunk and collar bones of a millennial.  
(MORE)



MAYBELLE (CONT'D)

Do you like to dance in the rain,  
chase tornados in pick up trucks,  
and get foot rubs while watching  
documentaries about cults? I do.  
Also, why are skinny white people so  
easy to trick? They see a man with a  
beard and a guitar and they're like,  
"There's Jesus." Anyhow, you can be  
any race as long as you were never  
in a cult. P.S. Yoga is a cult.

They cheer. They love her ads.

AMBER

Glad you left me out of that one.

MAYBELLE

(continues reading)

I also have an attractive grand-  
daughter with strong ankles and a  
good job. And she needs a man!

AMBER

For the millionth time. I don't  
need a man.

MAYBELLE

Yes you do! Who's gonna take care  
of you when I die?

AMBER

I'll take care of myself, just like  
I do now.

Maybelle cackles with laughter.

MAYBELLE

I feed you three squares, tuck you  
into bed every night, and then turn  
on a baby cam so I can keep an eye  
on you while I'm at the tavern. I  
take care of you *and* me.

AMBER

I pay the bills, shovel the  
driveway, I'm the one rubbing your  
feet while you grumble at hippie  
cults on the TV. I take care of us.

The microwave dings and Maybelle brings Amber her lunch. She  
blows on it a tucks a napkin into Amber's shirt.

AMBER (CONT'D)

Maybe it's closer to 50/50.

INT. VILLAGE GAZETTE BULLPEN - THE NEXT DAY

Amber, Jasmine, and Zak are working. Randall enters, happy.

RANDALL  
Good morning!

JASMINE  
You seem happy but you look so bad.

AMBER  
He didn't sleep. He was out with  
Bob Lupton till the wee hours. I  
have spies.

RANDALL  
Yep. I met your grandma at the bar.  
She tried to take me home.

JASMINE  
Don't be too flattered. She flirts  
with everyone. Even me.

AMBER  
So did you notice Benson's twinkly  
street lamps and willow lined  
avenues last night on your walk  
back to the motel and did it make  
you feel whole again?

RANDALL  
I mostly noticed that the gas  
station is also the bank and the  
town notary?

AMBER  
Yep. And he re-soles shoes!

RANDALL  
Cool. I think I've got a great  
angle for the Lupton story.

AMBER  
I knew Bob would win you over!

Randall smiles and crosses to his desk and gets to work.

AMBER (CONT'D)  
Whoa. He's already happier and  
loving Benson and it hasn't even  
been forty eight hours.

Davis enters with an article and a Tupperware of carrots. He  
hands Amber an article.

DAVIS

I finished the Irma article. The bunny kept biting me.

ZAK

Whoa. You're turning in an article on time?

AMBER

Early. And you got a new wonderful haircut?

JASMINE

And you're eating vegetables that you brought from home?

AMBER

Randall's really bringing out the competitor in you, Davis. I should thank him. I knew this town was gonna save him but I did not know he would be saving us!

DAVIS

He's not saving me. I made these damn carrots myself.

Amber is impressed by Davis's title and reads it aloud:

AMBER

Fuzzy Bunny Makes Irma Sunny! Love it!

INT. VILLAGE GAZETTE -BULLPEN- LATER

Teri and Jake pop in. Teri is in a bathrobe and Jake is carrying a large foam shell.

TERI

Look at my baby nephew, typin' away. He sucked his thumb until age eight!

RANDALL

I was five.

TERI

He's a real stickler for the truth.  
(winks)  
I don't care what everyone else says.

Randall's embarrassed, she kisses the top of his head.

JAKE

Jasmine and Zak, could we see you outside for a moment? My wife has had a stroke of genius for the Revord Fur art week ad.

Zak and Jasmine get up and follow them out.

ZAK

I'm scared.

JASMINE

You know Teri's naked under that robe.

EXT. MAIN STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Jake and Teri are standing two doors down from the paper in front of an ocean mural on the side of the Fish Emporium.

JAKE

Have you seen Botticelli's painting The Birth of Venus?

TERI

Venus in a seashell on the ocean floor. Her hair conveniently floating over her nether regions.

Teri gets in the shell and starts to drop her robe.

JASMINE

Sorry, but I can't run an ad featuring nudity. It's illegal.

JAKE

She's not nude, she's wearing a flesh colored bikini. A nude-kini.

ZAK

Is a seascape right for selling fur? It kinda makes you think of wet fur. Maybe we try a winter scape?

Pastor Trish passes by with lawn ornaments that look like a woman bending over in a garden, exposing her bloomers.

PASTOR TRISH

Beep Beep. Five lady gardening butts coming through.

(noticing Teri)

Wow, you look just like Venus standing in that shell.

(MORE)

PASTOR TRISH (CONT'D)

The way the light is hitting your hair. Gorgeous.

TERI

Trish gets my vision. It's because she's an artist. You paint, right?

TRISH

Not really. I dabble. I'm not good.

JAKE

Oh baby wife, wouldn't a painting of this be even better for our art week ad? Better than a boring ol' Zak photo. No offense, Zaky.

ZAK

None taken. I just take the photos because no one else on staff can work the equipment.

TERI

You've been replaced, Zak. Sorry, but Pastor Trish just gets me.

TRISH

I'm not at Botticelli's level-- I'm just a pastor. I eat broth soups.

Jasmine and Zak cross off, grateful to escape the situation.

INT. VILLAGE GAZETTE BULLPEN - LATER THAT DAY

Randall is whistling as he hands in the article to Amber.

RANDALL

Well, that was actually kind of fun.

AMBER

Bob's great right? He used to pull kid's wiggly teeth with pliers and then give them a Nilla Wafer from the jar. Did he give you a wafer?

RANDALL

Yep. Very stale!

Randall crosses off. Amber smiles and reads his title aloud.

AMBER

"Town Drunk Ruins Family Business,  
Hurts Town's Fragile Economy." Oh  
no.... It doesn't even rhyme.

Her face falls. This is not what she expected.

INT. VILLAGE GAZETTE BULLPEN - LATER

Amber timidly approaches Randall's desk.

AMBER

Hi. This is um, well-written. No  
spelling errors... but could you  
possibly rewrite it through a more  
sympathetic lens? Bob's a beloved  
member of our community. He taught  
me how to drive stick shift.

RANDALL

I don't want to write a fluff  
piece. I want to re-legitimize  
myself as a journalist and get the  
heck out of this insane town.

AMBER

You mean beautiful historic  
village?

ZAK

Whoa. You just made her nostrils  
flare. I've never seen that before.

AMBER

I know at the Star you had to write  
mean articles to sell papers. But  
we don't do that here! Our readers  
are loyal because they get to see  
their friends and family celebrated  
on our pages, not ripped apart.

RANDALL

Are you aware that four people are  
losing their jobs because of Bob  
Lupton's alcoholism?

AMBER

Are you aware that Bob Lupton is a  
real person with real feelings?

RANDALL

You think I don't know about real  
people?

AMBER

Why don't we ask your imaginary  
eight-year old heroin addict?

Amber covers her mouth, ashamed of her meanness. Randall  
bristles at the mention of his article.

RANDALL

Yeah, that's right. I lied. But  
you're a liar too. At least I'm  
trying to change.

JASMINE

Okay buster, back off. She's a lot  
of things... She's a bad dresser--

DAVIS

She's a big sneezer.

ZAK

She talks with candy in her mouth.

JASMINE

She high-fives too hard. But she is  
NOT a liar.

RANDALL

Oh really? 'Cause she told Teri and  
Jake that everyone was excited to  
have me here. You're not. She told  
Davis his haircut looked wonderful;  
he has a bunch of gray tufts on his  
neck. And she said she loved your  
tuna casserole. She hates it.

AMBER

I do not. I... I like it.

RANDALL

She threw it in the trash and hid  
it under a Captain Crunch box.

AMBER

I didn't lie, I fibbed. To make  
people feel good.

RANDALL

Okay. Me too. I fibbed to make my  
editor feel good because the paper  
hadn't had an award winning story  
for over a year. So I fibbed about  
a child drug addict. I lied to keep  
my job. Why do you lie, Amber?  
What's in it for you?

AMBER

Nothing. Not hurting people...  
Being liked!

RANDALL

Journalism isn't a popularity  
contest. It's your job to tell the  
truth. This is the truth.

He tosses his article on her desk and leaves. Amber's  
stunned. She looks at the faces of her disappointed staff.

AMBER

I'm not a liar, gang...

**END ACT TWO**



**ACT THREE**INT. VILLAGE GAZETTE BULLPEN - LATER THAT DAY

Amber is surrounded by Davis, Jasmine, and Zak who are fake mad at her, but she's still reeling with guilt.

ZAK

We just need to reaffirm our faith  
in you. Prove you're not a liar.

JASMINE

Big Bite. Get some fried onions.

A tuna casserole is in front of Amber. She goes to take a bite, but is interrupted by Teri, Jake, and Pastor Trish.

TERI

Attention! Welcome to the unveiling!

Pastor Trish holds up a large portrait covered by a towel.

JAKE

This is a tribute to Botticelli. A  
tribute to Benson. A tribute to  
Revord Fur, established in 1898.

She reveals the painting of Teri as Venus. Fur stoles cover her private parts. REVORD FURS is stenciled across the top.

TERI

Isn't it beautiful?

They are all horrified and look to Amber. Davis whispers:

DAVIS

Prove you're not a liar.

Amber tries her best to not lie...

AMBER

Wow. Great colors. I really sense  
the motion of being underwater--

PASTOR TRISH

I can't believe Sarpy County's  
going to see my art in the gazette  
tomorrow. Amber, thank you for  
believing in me when I didn't.

AMBER

You're welcome? I-- I'm--

Randall walks by. He stops and takes in the portrait.

RANDALL  
Are you trying to not sell furs?

JAKE  
No. The opposite. We're trying to  
sell furs.

RANDALL  
It looks like you have four foot  
long pubic hair.

He walks off leaving Teri looking sideways at the painting.

TERI  
Oh no. Baby nephew's right. It's  
all I can see now. We can't print  
it.

Trish sulks off. Amber grabs the painting and follows her.

INT. VILLAGE GAZETTE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

AMBER  
Trish, wait up. You really got the  
perfect light and angle. The aqua  
is popping off--

PASTOR TRISH  
I was dumb to think my art would be  
in the paper. I already bragged to  
my cousin who always rubs her tan  
husband and kids and house on a man  
made lake in my face. She wins  
again. I'm just a frumpy pastor who  
should stick to hymns and waiting  
in hospital lobbies to pray for  
bunion surgeries. I'm not an  
artist. Stay in your lane, Trish!

AMBER  
Trish. I love your art.

PASTOR TRISH  
Do you like this painting?

Amber furrows her brow. She's trying not to be the liar  
Randall accused her of being.

AMBER  
No.

Trish takes the painting from Amber. She breaks it in half and exits as Zak enters.

ZAK

Oh snap. Maybe I liked you better when you were a liar.

AMBER

I liked me better too.

INT. GRANDMA'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM

Maybelle sits across from Amber who's sulking at the table.

MAYBELLE

Is it really that bad? C'mon, I worked all day on your favorite dinner. Pot pies.

AMBER

I bought those two for three dollars at Hy-Vee.

MAYBELLE

Did I put a frozen pot pie on your plate? No, I made it. For you.

AMBER

Randall accused me of being a liar in front of my entire staff.

MAYBELLE

Randall? Oh my. He is very sturdy. You undersold him to me. I have two important words for you: Get. It.

AMBER

He's awful and he's making me awful. I was mean to Trish today-- I guess I'm a bad person now. We were all happy and Benson was perfect but he's ruining my work, and my friendships, and my town.

MAYBELLE

This seems like dramatic Amber. Age fourteen to sixteen, bless our hearts, we lived to tell the tale.

AMBER

I'm not being dramatic. He's dead set on writing an exposè about Benson that gets him national attention and rips our idyllic village apart. His first article was about Bob Lupton being a drunk.

MAYBELLE

Well... Bob Lupton is a drunk.

AMBER

He's also a really good guy.

MAYBELLE

Sure. Can't he be both? A drunk and a good guy? People are lots of things like me, I'm a lover *and* a I'm a fighter. A beauty *and* a beast. A rock and... a hard place. Oooooh! I don't understand that one but I like it!

AMBER

You're definitely a beast... and a beauty. You just gave me an idea. Thank you, Gramb!

She jumps up and kisses her grandma's face.

MAYBELLE

Why can't you be aggressive like that with Randall? Or I'd even settle for that not handsome/not ugly fella that sells houses, Brent? He has nice nail beds.

Amber types and sends a flurry of texts.

AMBER

I'm going with you to the Tavern.

MAYBELLE

Hot diggity! Will you please wear something that shows your shape?

AMBER

No. But thanks for asking nicely.

INT. VILLAGE TAVERN - LATER

It's a crowded, warm, local tavern. Amber and Maybelle are at the bar. Maybelle is dressed as if she's going to the Oscars.

MAYBELLE

A double vodka gimlet for me and  
what do you want, Sweet Feet?

AMBER

A Shirley Temple please. I'm  
driving, 'cause I take care of you.

MAYBELLE

Then this round is on you.

Amber lovingly rolls her eyes. Randall enters.

RANDALL

This better be good. I had to leave  
the luxurious Motel 7, where you  
have to put down a deposit to get a  
remote control.

(then)

What did you want to show me?

MAYBELLE

Show him how nice your teeth are.

AMBER

Ignore her. Please. Follow me.

She guides him to Bob Lupton, who's drunk and with HIS PAL.

AMBER (CONT'D)

Hey Bob, I was just telling Randall  
about the flood of '92.

BOB LUPTON

Ah geez, the Platte River went over  
her banks and ravaged Benson like  
my third wife when she found out I  
was gambling again. She threw  
plates, broke my entire collection  
of ceramic Dalmatians--

BOB'S PAL

Bob gave everybody sixty percent  
off all merchandise to rebuild  
their homes. He lost money.

Bob tries to deflect away from himself.

BOB LUPTON

Everyone, attention please! A round  
on me, Bobby Lupton.

The bar cheers. Amber tries to yell over them.

AMBER

Nope. No. He's not buying a round, y'all. That was my fault.

MAYBELLE

Then you buy us a round.

Amber shrugs, "Okay!" The bar cheers.

AMBER

(aside, to Randall)

I just wanted to show you that it wasn't just Bob's drunkenness that ruined his business, it was his drunken generosity. I'm going to write the tribute he deserves. And I'm not going to lie, it'll just be a different angle on the truth.

RANDALL

(half teasing)

What if I just change the title to, "Drunk's Generosity Ruins Family Business, Hurts Town Economy." Does that work? C'mon, I gotta get printed so I can get out of here.

AMBER

I don't know why you're in such a hurry to leave this place. Didn't you say four strangers stopped and offered you rides to work today?

RANDALL

It's a three block walk. They made me late!

AMBER

It's sad. You don't know how to be treated nice. You're more comfy being an anonymous New York grouch.

RANDALL

(softens a little)

A grouch who can get a good coffee, and some decent take out, yeah. C'mon, you don't even have Thai food here.

AMBER

We have a Dragon Buffet!

A back scratcher with a hand enters frame. It's Maybelle and she moves the hand toward Amber's mouth and lifts her lip.

MAYBELLE

Her bright pink gums let you know she's healthy.

AMBER

That's my cue to go home.

RANDALL

Does everyone in this town have those back scratchers?

MAYBELLE

This was the top seller at last year's Art Fair. It's much more than a back scratcher. It's a shoe horn, a cup on the top shelf reacher, a steal chips from the vending machine tool--

Amber exits, as Maybelle shamelessly flirts with Randall.

INT. VILLAGE GAZETTE BULLPEN - THE NEXT DAY

Amber's hands are covering Pastor Trish's eyes. Jasmine puts a copy of the paper in front of them.

AMBER

What will be on the doorstep of folks across southeastern Nebraska tomorrow morn? Including your snobby cousin's?

She takes her hands off of her eyes to reveal Pastor Trish's painting of Main Street on the front page. Lupton Hardware is in the center of the painting. Everyone applauds.

PASTOR TRISH

(reads)

Bob Lupton and a Car Called Wanda.

AMBER

Your painting is perfect. You even painted Wanda parked in front of Lupton Hardware.

PASTOR TRISH

It's beautiful.

DAVIS

The article or your painting?

PASTOR TRISH  
(teary)  
Both. Thank you.

INT. VILLAGE GAZETTE - KITCHEN - LATER

Randall enters holding the paper. Amber is scratching her own back with the scratcher and giving herself directions.

AMBER  
A little down. A little to the right. Oooo! Mama!

RANDALL  
I read your article. Saw that you pandered a little to this audience.

He gestures to himself.

AMBER  
Yep. I acknowledged Bob drinks Tennessee Whiskey every day, all day. And I put a link to AA at the bottom of the article.

RANDALL  
It was a pretty small font.

AMBER  
But it was there. Big for me.

RANDALL  
Actually, my throat got a lump when I read the part about Bob and your dad building your bunkbed upside down.  
(then)  
I'm sorry you lost your parents. That sucks.

AMBER  
It did suck, but this town saved me. It'll do that for you too.

RANDALL  
Well, it better hurry 'cause I got a hot angle on the mayor. Did you know he has a roofing business on the side?



AMBER

He has to. Benson Mayor is a  
volunteer position, they get zero  
dollars.

RANDALL

Well, I still got my mesothelioma  
story.

AMBER

And your World's Second Largest  
Coffee Table story. Busy, busy.

They finally do a handshake. Then work out the kinks to  
solidify this will be their thing going forward.

**END ACT THREE**

**TAG**EXT. BENSON MAIN STREET

It's the night of the art fair and the town is bustling. Amber pushes her bike under twinkly lights, greeting people. She sees Randall drinking a beer with Bob Lupton.

AMBER

Does he know you tried to wreck his reputation?

RANDALL

Don't tell him please, he's the only one here that will talk to me.

AMBER

It takes them awhile to warm up to big city famously disgraced liars.

(beat)

But they are cool with small town sweetie pie liars.

Maybelle approaches them, looking beautiful.

MAYBELLE

Is this a date?

AMBER/RANDALL

Definitely not./No.

MAYBELLE

Then take me to the dance floor and make me feel forty-three again!

Maybelle drags Randall toward the dance floor. Davis, who is dressed in a suit, jogs toward them.

DAVIS

Maybelle Liskey. I'd actually like to have this dance.

Maybelle takes in this new version of Davis.

MAYBELLE

Well hello and good morning, Davis. I never knew you had a leading man's chin. Let's go.

Maybelle takes Davis' hand and leaves Randall standing alone. Looking out at a community who belong to each other and seem happy about it. Amber bikes by him in her helmet singing:

AMBER

IT'S BENSON!

**END OF SHOW**