

FADE IN

by  
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based on:  
Channel 79

by  
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Episode #7:

Two-and-a-Half Candidates

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## TWO AND HALF CANDIDATES

FADE IN:

INT. HOWARD WEAVER'S OFFICE - DAY

Massive corner office with ornate corporate decorations, a 120 degree view of the Sacramento River and a jogging trail with scantily clad coeds bouncing..

WEAVER

ACTON!

Acton, jerks his head off Weaver's desk. A band of drool snaps into his face as he falls back into the chair across from Weaver.

WEAVER

I'm reading this disaster you call a column and you drift off?

ACTON

(glances around)  
Your office is a lot nicer passed out than wide awake.

WEAVER

(holds up paper)  
We can't go with this.

ACTON

I send it to you in email and then you print it out to read?

WEAVER

My shrink said to burn it one page at a time, for closure.

ACTON

(squints)  
Who's getting foreclosed on?

WEAVER

You cannot call Ralph Nader the Democratic serial killer.

ACTON

(grabs the paper)  
Did I misspell that again?  
(reads)  
Nope... S-E-R-I-A-L -- yeah, that's right. What's the problem?

WEAVER

We're going to hear about it from readers who...

ACTON

What? Think I'm giving real serial killers a bad name?

WEAVER

No, but "Ralph Nader, Presidential Candidate Serial Killer" is out.

ACTON

Are you, like -- mainlining espresso or something?

WEAVER

If you want to use a metaphor, use an appropriate one.

ACTON

Like, "Ralph Nader, the Corvair Candidate: every once in a while it looks good, but it still don't run right."

WEAVER

No, like a more appropriate literary reference, someone like Don Quixote.

ACTON

You mean John Quinones?

WEAVER

No, I mean Don Quixote.

ACTON

I'm pretty sure the reporter dude from 20/20 is John Quinones.

WEAVER

Don Quixote! Q-U-I-X-O-T-E. Quixote!

ACTON

You keep saying that name. I don't think it means who you think it means.

WEAVER

I know exactly who it means...

ACTON

OK, but I wouldn't monkey with him, he's a real reporter -

WEAVER

Yeah -- unlike the dopes and goofballs in your column.

You do realize you haven't picked one thing right in the whole damn primary season? Not one!

ACTON

I'm pacing myself.

WEAVER

I just don't understand how you can be consistently wrong about everything.

ACTON

See, there you go. You can't count on that kind of consistency from your other columnists, can you?

WEAVER

No, some of them actually happen to be right every now and then.

ACTON

And there it is.

WEAVER

And there what is?

ACTON

Well, you can't be sure when they're going to be right or wrong, so you're building a false sense of security for your readers based on this complete lack of experiential consistency. It's classically Jungian.

WEAVER

(tosses the paper  
aside)

Oh, hell. Why didn't you just say you were in therapy?

ACTON

I didn't want to make you jealous.

WEAVER

Let's try, for just the briefest of moments, to move me from "jealous" to "happy".

ACTON

Happy's good.

WEAVER

What would make me happy is if just one thing you put in your column came true and I could stop apologizing to real columnists who want your job.

ACTON

Like what?

WEAVER

Like when you said the race was going to be Giuliani and Clinton because "The Rude-meister" was ahead on Labor Day and whoever was ahead on Labor Day always won the Republican nomination.

ACTON

I never said that.

WEAVER

You did too, I'm looking right at it. And then you said that Clinton was so far ahead, you could see her lead from space.

ACTON

I never said that either.

WEAVER

And let's not forget the 3-1 odds you posted on Clinton to win the presidency. AND -- AND there's the 6 to 1 odds for Romney vs. 7 to 1 for McCain to take the nomination.

ACTON

Are you high? I never said any of that!

WEAVER

Again, all I have as proof are the columns you wrote that we put up online and that I'm reading from right now. I could be wrong. It's entirely possible Giuliani's doing the Rope-A-Dope and everyone's lying to Obama about the wins.

ACTON

Sarcasm is the humor of a weak mind, my friend.

WEAVER

I'm not being sarcastic, I'm just trying to get you to understand you can't keep making these wild-ass prognostications without some actual input from people who know what they're talking about.

ACTON

So I can make wild-ass prognostications as long as I got someone backing me up?

WEAVER

Well, somebody, something, some kernel or a morsel of insight upon which we can...

ACTON

You do know I'm not making this stuff up right?

WEAVER

What are you talking about? -- that's exactly what you're doing. Your column is supposed to give people something to think about while they're laughing.

ACTON

Well, yeah. But it's not like those are my words I'm sending in.

WEAVER

WHAT? ARE YOU SAYING YOU'RE NOT WRITING THIS COLUMN? THAT SOMEONE ELSE IS?

ACTON

Exactly. Well, not exactly, exactly. But sorta exactly. See I'm just writing it down.

WEAVER

Writing down what?

ACTON

Whatever happens at Channel 79 and Channel 8.

WEAVER

NOTHING HAPPENS AT CHANNEL 79 OR CHANNEL 8. YOU MADE THEM UP!

ACTON

I never said I made them up. All I said was I wrote a screenplay about them.

WEAVER

So, they're real? You're telling me that everyone you've been writing about is real?

ACTON

Well, apparently they're also wrong, but... well, there it is.

WEAVER

(doesn't believe it)  
I wanna meet 'em.

ACTON

No problem. I'm having lunch with some of the gang right after this. They're waiting in your reception.

WEAVER

Here? Now? Right outside THAT door?

ACTON

Yeah. They're probably ogling Jill right now.

Weaver walks to the door, carefully opens it and peeks outside. Nobody. He opens it wider. Nothing. He opens it all the way. Not even a bag on the floor.

WEAVER

So, all "these" people are the ones you're writing about?

ACTON

Dude, you need to get more sleep and go organic. There's no one out there. The room's empty. You do see that, right?

WEAVER

Yes, I see everybody that's not there...

ACTON

Yeah, you know... this may not be the right time to go existential. Maybe after you've had --

A troop of people march in, all carrying paper coffee cups. Howard's assistant, Jill, is riding drag and herds the last of them into the reception area.

JILL

OK, everybody here? Everybody got everything? Everybody put back what wasn't theirs?

WEAVER

(to Jill)

Who are all these people?

JILL

Hey, I'm just the wrangler on this job -- ask Acton.

ACTON

This is they. This is them. These are my people.

JILL

And his people have been sitting out here arguing about the primary since you two went under the hood in there.

Lu O'Neil, Channel 79 Manager.

LU

There ain't no argument, honey. Hillary needed to win the last debate and the closest she got to Obama was sitting next to him.

Jane Lee, Channel 8's Sales Manager.

JANE

Oh, great. Here we go. When did experience become a bad thing? I mean, if you're going to fly to Hawaii, you want a pilot that's done it before, or one who just says he can?

Bill Marlin, 8's News Director.

BILL

I want a pilot who's actually been a pilot -- not a couple of people who've flown a kite and made a model airplane. Gimme McCain -- he's at least been in the pilot's seat.

LU

You do know he got his ass shot down, right?

ACTON

Guys, guys -- I have it on good authority that if you're going to use metaphors around here, you gotta call John Quinones.

Spud, 79's Youth Reporter.

SPUD

The 20/20 guy?

JILL

I'm out.

Jill gets her coat and purse.

WEAVER

Where are you going?

JILL

To book a three-day holiday at Rancho Dinero that you're going to authorize.

Weaver watches Jill leave. Now it's just him.

WEAVER

OK, so... ahhh, what you're saying is that you just sit around with these guys --

LU

Hey!

WEAVER

-- ahh... "guys" in that gender neutral, non-specific sexual identification, and fully aesthetically valid in a philosophical kinda way -- and you...

ACTON

... write shit down.

WEAVER

So, I could ask questions, and they could actually answer them?

SPUD

You mean like, did Hillary bite down on it or does she still have a chance?

ACTON

Hit it, Spud.

SPUD

Hillary's like, totally screwed the pooch, but it's a big bad dog and she's got plenty of fight left.

WEAVER

Oh, God.

SPUD

No, really dude. It was like hers to lose but all she's really done is given up the lead, she ain't lost the race unless she blows TOP. She blows TOP and she fetches up hard like the Valdez oil spill - and they'll be talking about it for about as long too.

WEAVER

I know this is going to cost me another Ambien, but what the hell is TOP?

SPUD

TOP -- Texas, Ohio, Pennsylvania, hello?

(to Acton)

I thought you said he was an expert.

ACTON

I may have oversold that a bit.

SPUD

(sighs)

Dude, Obama's on a killer streak, but he's killing mice. Hillary's hunting elephants. Neither strategy is right or wrong. They're just different. It's gonna come down to the wire, at the last minute and the winner's gonna be whoever the voters believe on THAT day.

(a beat)

But, if Hillary blows it, maybe she and Celine Dion can patch things up enough for Celine to come back and sing "My Heart Will Go On" from the Titanic. That would be so awesome.

LU

Are you gay?

SPUD

I don't think so, but I'm personally offended by that kind of negative stereotyping. It would be like saying anyone who would vote for Nader is an of out of touch --

LU

-- wide-ass, mouth-breathing knucklehead?

WEAVER

I'm going to sit down now.

LU

Why? I ain't lying. Nobody's going to vote for Nader that would have voted for Hillary or Obama.

JANE

But 90,000 of them voted for him last time -- stole the election from Gore.

LU

Wake the hell up, girlfriend. Nader didn't steal no votes from Gore, he stole them from the couch. Those boneheads didn't want to participate in an election, they just wanted to bitch from the sidelines.

(a beat)

Hell, Nader didn't beat Gore. Clinton beat Gore. But Obama ain't Gore. And Clinton ain't Clinton, no more.

WEAVER

(claps his hands)

OK, mystery solved about who's real and why I owe Jill a vacation. Thank you all for coming in. I'm due back on the planet Earth for a meeting in 15 minutes and I think I'll take the next 10 minutes to practice some deep breathing exercises.

Weaver glares at Acton, walks back into his office, closes the door.

A moment of silence falls over the group. Finally, everyone gets up. Jill walks back in.

JILL

He buy it?

ACTON

Rule: always hire SAG actors.

(a beat)

I think he thinks I'm self medicating, but overall, I'd give it a 5.8.

The group AD LIBS "5.7" "5.8" "5.8" as Acton digs into his pocket.

JILL

So what happens now?

Acton hands money out to everyone.

ACTON

Next week, he starts getting taller.

JILL

Hang on. I'll get you the contact info for his tailor.

THE END