

## **Recipe**

**890 words**

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Chris figured stay out of trouble, and he dusted off his degree and was teaching a beginning journalism course at the JC.

The first class, he started out lecturing and put side-by-side examples of do's and dont's on the board and asked which is which and why.

A hand went up here and there but that was about it, and Chris watched them file out like a bunch of zombies.

So the second class he said: "Gimme the most outrageous thing you're aware of someone doing. And write it up as a straight news story--high importance to least important. You have 30 minutes. Let's go!"

Students shifted around, there were some groans, someone asked could he please post the assignment. Chris said, "The clock's ticking. Bear down."

Much better. Now they were all at least doing something. He gave them the full period even though he threatened the half hour mark. He almost started typing his version up too, kill some time, but nah.

When he got home there was a message from the woman he met at the donut shop last week, Renee, do you feel like a bite. Chris didn't particularly, he wanted to start on the assignments, curious what people came up with. But Renee said oh come on, and they met at the Booker Lounge, got a little too sloshed and walked back to Chris's.

Renee said, "He's a handsome man, Booker."

"I get that from various people," Chris said. "Would you do something with him, the opportunity presented itself?"

"I think I would."

"See now that type of honesty . . ."

"Over the top?"

"Not at all. What's the most outrageous thing you saw someone do? Or I'll let you apply it to yourself if you like."

"Very generous of you. Where on earth are you going with this?"

She'd made herself comfortable, turned up the thermostat and was sitting on the couch in her underwear. She did this once before, and Chris wasn't sure how he felt about it.

"Here ya are," Chris said, opening the laptop to the

assignments. “Pick one at random, you’ll get the idea.”

Renee gave him a look.

“You’re stalling,” Chris said, “let’s see what we got.”

She scrolled past a few. “Micah. Is that a male or female?”

“Don’t worry about it. What’s the lede?”

*The car whirled down the straightaway but carried too much speed into the turn. The car went sideways and cartwheeled up and over the retaining fence.*

“Jeez not bad,” Chris said. “Try another one.”

“From Suzanna . . .”

*He climbed the third and final ladder to the perch, dove off, and missed the water and snapped his neck.*

“Dang,” Chris said, “both dying so far. But pretty lean prose, which I’m looking for.”

“The driver might have survived,” Renee said. “How bout this one . . .”

*My friend, he’s all, I need to tell my history teacher that I once broke into the school and changed my grade in the book.*

“Hmm.”

“Okay here we go, these are kind of fun actually . . .”

*Richard Simpson mooned the homecoming queen at the state fair and got attacked with a pie. A hospital*

*spokesman said his condition was unknown.*

“A few things to polish, but good energy all four,” Chris said. “So what’d be yours?”

“Kay you first.”

“No you.”

“Wow. Well . . . not sure in this one, but in a past life I was a Mafia mistress. Not for a high-level person but for a rank and file member. There was a raid at 4 in the morning and that’s the last thing I remember. This was like in the 1930’s.”

Chris thinking uh-oh. He said, “Mine, I pushed a couple buttons, someone I should have ignored, and got beat up good but I had to go to my niece’s dance recital and made up a story.”

“What did you make up?”

“I think I tripped over the cat trying to answer the doorbell. No one bought it, my face was pretty bad.”

“Then maybe you’ve lived a sheltered life Chris. If getting in a fight is the best you have.”

Chris wondered what she’d do with the real story-- that he had to keep a commitment and go to the opera after drowning a guy--and even though it was a Puccini, supposedly streamlined, it still went on forever and he didn’t understand a single thing.

He said, “Maybe you should take my class. You are inventive.”

She said, “Okay next time ask them this. Ask them to describe the most partially-cloudy beautiful sunset they ever saw. Make it over land.”

“Ah Jesus.”

“Or how bout--someone they spied on. What they suspect.”

“That’s better. But this is straight newswriting I’m trying to teach. There’s a formula.”

“And the formula you’re missing, is ask more questions . . . Especially when you think the interview person is bullshitting you.”

“You?”

“You. Chris you have a bunch of internal baggage. If you like, I can do a reading on you, we can free a lot of that up.”

Chris had his palm read once in his college dorm. This sounded more complicated, and kind of interesting, but scary. For tonight anyway, the Mob business and the bikini underwear worked decent enough.