

TALES FROM WILLIAMSVILLE

By John Coons

Adapted for Radio by
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TALES FROM WILLIAMSVILLE

CAST

NARRATOR	Commentator on the Tales
MICHAEL BURBANK	Arsonist with a literary complex
JAWORSKI	The town librarian
ABIGAIL TWEETER	A vivacious and mad old lady
GIRL	A girl hosting a yard sale
RICK LOVELY	Sleazy proprietor of a motel
MAN	A guy looking to get some
MOTHER 1, 2, 3	Housewives of Williamsville
HELEN BINTLIFF	A soccer mom on crack
JOE WILLIAMS XI	The doofish mayor
ANNOUNCER 1	An announcer at a grocery store
ANNOUNCER 2	A narrator of a nature documentary
JUDITH	Mayor Williams' secretary

TALES FROM WILLIAMSVILLE

SCENE ONE: INTRODUCTION

(Narrator)

NARRATOR

Welcome to Williamsville, a town of single-family homes, above-average incomes, two-car garages and more Joneses than 5th Avenue. The illustrious history of Williamsville began with the treaty of 1742, when Joseph R. Williams the First, a destitute Irishman on the run from the law, got the local Indian chief to sign a treaty handing the land over to him one late night over two bottles of Finnegan's Finest. The modest start to Williamsville was in baskets and beaver pelts, their rise to fame the great textile mills of the late 19th century, and a gracious end to this time of boozing and caterwauling came as the great Depression ripped the guts out of the industry and left the ugly downtown to rot as post-war sprawl took hold. Oh, it has only been up, up, up for Williamsville in the last 50 years, though many old timers will tell you that nothing really changes around here.

NARRATOR: It's a small place, a pleasant place, a great place to raise your kids. But not a place without its stories...

MUSIC: PLEASANT BUT QUIRKY, UP AND UNDER

NARRATOR: The story today begins with Michael Burbank, data-entry clerk at the local feed store for the last seven years, a position he slid into after his community college internship. Yet, a steady income, benefits, and 401k plan did little to assuage Michael's Damocles-like sense of guilt.

SCENE TWO: INT. LIBRARY - DAY

(Jaworski, Narrator, Young Michael, Michael)

SOUND: HUSHED LIBRARY AMBIENCE

JAWORSKI: (CONDESCENDINGLY) Michael... It hardly looks like you opened the cover of this one.

NARRATOR: It all started ten years ago at the library.

YOUNG MICHAEL: Uh, uh sure I did, Mrs. Jaworski, see?

SOUND: RUSTLE OF PAPER.

JAWORSKI: You probably downloaded those notes off the internet. You've been pretending to read the summer reading list, haven't you?

YOUNG MICHAEL: I, I, uh...

JAWORSKI: Now how do you EVER expect to pass the SATs if you don't start reading now? Why, you'll never get into a good college -- let alone your ridiculous ambition to be a writer.

YOUNG MICHAEL: But... Mrs. Jaworski, I've been trying...

JAWORSKI: (STARTLINGLY MEAN) Only losers try! Stop wasting my time!

MICHAEL: Ahhh!

NARRATOR: Ever since that childhood infraction, Michael committed himself to reading every single volume in the looming stacks. A task that would be better suited to Sisyphus.

MICHAEL: There are too many stupid books! No one can read them all... not that any of them are good anyways...

NARRATOR: Michael may not have met his erudite expectations, but he knew when he was lying to himself.

MICHAEL: I should read more...

NARRATOR: And with that the cycle would begin again: he'd compile a reading list and read more vigilantly than a conspiracy theorist. But it always ended up like a French novel: Sadly, and yet true to himself, he never reached his lofty goal.

MICHAEL: (WITH ALTERNATING THWACKS OF THE HEAD)
Stupid stupid stupid stupid stupid!

NARRATOR: The sheer population of books reminded him of how little he had accomplished compared to everyone else.

MICHAEL: I've never finished this series... and, and, I've never finished even *one* section of this stupid library, and this is one stupid library in the whole stupid world!

NARRATOR: Worst of all, he knew he'd never write a book. No, that kind of immortality was reserved for those with far more gumption than he. Even if that book sold just five copies...

MICHAEL: (BITTERLY) Three of them to my mother...

NARRATOR: ...It would be something permanent, a lasting contribution to society. Yet, he knew he'd never be good enough to write a single paragraph. It was this guilt that lead Michael to arson. But we'll get to that part of the story later.

SCENE THREE: YARDSALE

(Abigail, Girl, Narrator)

ABIGAIL: Twenty-five cents, and that's my final offer!

GIRL: Yes, Mrs. Tweeter, that's what the sign says. Mom said not to charge too much.

ABIGAIL: And not a penny more! You can't rickshaw me into more than, oh, fifty cents!

GIRL: Oh of course Mrs. Tweeter, I'd never think of--

ABIGAIL: That settles it! Here's a dollar!

GIRL: Uh, well, thank you Mrs. Tweeter.

ABIGAIL: (OFF, MUTTERING) Slick fish little brat...

NARRATOR: Neither the girl nor her mom could ever decipher the incident of "Arsenic and Old Lace," the VHS Abigail Tweeter, or Abitweeter as she was called in the adult circles, had insisted on haggling over at the Labor Day yard sale. No one on the block suspected Mrs. Abigail Tweeter's carefully hidden secret...

SOUND: CUT TO SCENE FROM "ARSENIC AND OLD LACE"
PLAYED IN THE BACKGROUND FROM A NOISY OLD
TV, CREAKING OF COUCH SPRINGS, MOANS FROM A
MAN AND DISCOMFORTING SOUNDS FROM ABIGAIL.
ESTABLISH, THEN CUT SUDDENLY.

NARRATOR: ...Abigail Tweeter was entertaining nightly. But if Abigail Tweeter had the best kept secret in Williamsville, Rick Lovely had the worst.

SCENE FOUR: MOTEL

(Rick, Man, Narrator)

SOUND: ELECTRIC SLEAZE BLUES FROM A RASPY SPEAKER,
DOOR JINGLES

RICK: Hey, what can I do for ya?

MAN: You uh... rent by the hour?

SOUND: (GIRL GIGGLES)

RICK: (SNIFFS) Sure do... If ya pay cash.

NARRATOR: Rick Lovely. Rick owned Lovely's One Stop, Lovely's Motel, and 18.7% of the rest of Williamsville. He drove a Lincoln Towncar with \$2000 chrome rims, lived in a house dubbed a "ludicrous display of opulence" by the Williamsville Coronet, and had a different Hawaiian shirt for every day of the year. He inherited all this from his father, who met a premature end for reasons that eluded only the most naïve in Williamsville. Reasons related to his-- other--profession.

SOUND: SNNNNNNNNORT!

RICK: Ahh...

NARRATOR: Rick Lovely, the man everyone loved to hate in Williamsville. The man with the omnipresent smile that didn't so much beam like sunshine, but glimmer like the edge of a knife.

SCENE FIVE: BINTLIFF HOUSE

(Narrator, Mothers, Helen)

SOUND: CARROT CHOPPED WITH KNIFE - HARD! CHOP,
CHOP, CHOP, CHOP, CHOP...

NARRATOR: Which brings me to Helen Bintliff, queen of the housewives, empress of the suburbs, alpha among the pack of mothers that patrolled Williamsville's street. Indeed, Helen Bintliff was a legend among Williamsville's mothers--

MOTHER 1: She's got eyes like an eagle's

MOTHER 2: The cooking skills of Julia Child!

MOTHER 3: The schedule of a head of state

MOTHER 2: The investment portfolio of a New York stock broker

MOTHER 1: And the grin of Rosie the Riveter.

NARRATOR: And with 6 children, she also had a uterus capable of passing a Buick. To Helen, nothing was a challenge.

SOUND: FOOD PROCESSOR BUZZES ON FOR A FEW SECONDS.

HELEN:

(TAKES BREATH, THEN UNLEASHES) It's a modern age, and I'm a modern woman. You have to keep up with the times--go, go, go, go, you know? A little coffee here, a little catnap there, and in the middle there are soccer games, mall trips, business lunches, night classes towards my Master's degree, house cleaning, church socials, committee meetings, piano recitals and making the best bisque this side of the Seine... (CHUCKLES) if you know what I mean.

NARRATOR:

Stewarding this medley of upstanding citizens was the mayor, Joe Williams XI. Most people would call Joe Williams a good mayor--or, at least, a fine mayor. An average mayor, at the very least. You couldn't find anything *wrong* with Joe Williams, with his moderate height, average weight, middle age, fair wife, 2.5 children and dog. No one could say anything bad about the man who lived in a modest house with the same mailbox as everyone else, who received as much junk mail as the rest...
(CONT.)

NARRATOR: And it was this, more than any virtue, that kept Joe Williams in office for the last thirteen years.

JOE: (AMPLIFIED) I put the Williams in Williamsville!

SOUND: CROWD CHEERS.

NARRATOR: Joe Williams was as comfortable as an old pair of sneakers. After all, the people had had a Joe for mayor since Williamsville's origins. He was practically tradition. And nothing made the people in Williamsville more comfortable than tradition... Though it wasn't tradition so much as routine that found Helen Bintliff shopping at the Piggly Wiggly that Tuesday afternoon.

SCENE SIX: SUPERMARKET - DAY

(Announcer, Narrator, Abigail, Helen)

SOUND: PLEASANT ELEVATOR MUSIC

ANNOUNCER 1: Attention shoppers, don't miss the great pickle sale in aisle 13, 3 for 1 sweet pickles, 4 dills for a dollar! Buy one, get one free on your favorite kinds of relish...

SOUND: SHOPPING CART WHEELING FURIOUSLY DOWN THE AISLE

NARRATOR: Tuesday was two-for-one coupon day, and Helen charged down the aisles with her arsenal of coupons as if she was trying to repel the Germans. She was like an Olympian in the grocery store, and was hoping today to break her record 58.4 minutes of shopping time and steal a victory nap before picking the kids up from soccer practice. But as she wheeled around Aisle 13, disaster struck.

SOUND: SHOPPING CART CAREENS INTO ANOTHER ONE, GLASS SHATTERS.

ABIGAIL: Ohhh, Helen!

HELEN: (ANXIOUS) Oh, hi Abbitweeter, I, ah, didn't see you there--

ABIGAIL: Now that's alright, Helen, these aisles just get smaller and smaller over the years.

HELEN: Isn't that right? Now I was just--

ABIGAIL: Have you seen the sale on these pickles? Why, it's practically robbery. Back in my day, pickles were only a nickel. Can you believe it? A pickle for a nickel!

HELEN: Times sure have changed, now if you'd excuse me-- Wait, you don't have any teeth, how can you eat pickles?

ABIGAIL: Oh, I manage...

HELEN: What? By sucking on them?

SOUND: AWKWARD SILENCE

HELEN: Like I said, I was just leaving, ta-ta!

NARRATOR: Helen had inadvertently come closer to Abigail's secret than anyone yet. Abigail thanked her lucky stars that Helen hadn't taken the time to look into her cart, filled as it was with a bottle of peach schnapps, two filet mignons, a spool of rope, whipped cream, and six jars of the biggest pickles she could find. Tonight was a big night for Abigail Tweeter: the anniversary of the first night that Fred Stoops, the hapless mailman, had brought her a misplaced Sears catalog and stumbled right into her arms.

NARRATOR: 365 days of geriatric gyrations later, it was time to celebrate, and no one and nothing could ruin it for her, or her name wasn't Abigail Gertrude Tweeter. Which it was, wasn't it?

SCENE SEVEN: PTA MEETING - NIGHT

(Narrator, Mothers, Helen)

NARRATOR: Meanwhile, Helen Bintliff quickly forgot about the incident in the grocery store and grudgingly missed her nap to pick up the kids, cook dinner, shower, and show up for the PTA ten minutes ahead of time. You see, in Williamsville, if you wanted to get something done, you didn't go to the town meeting, you went to the PTA meeting... Because if you wanted the delirious enthusiasm of a Southern revival gathering and more wild ideas than a network TV writer's room, you couldn't find a more captive audience than the PTA. After all, just about any cause justified the industrial-grade efficiency of the PTA, as long as it was in "the best interests of the children."

MOTHER 1: You know, that pot-hole on Main St. sure's been bugging me--

MOTHER 2: Yes, ah, little Jenny tripped over that stupid oak in the middle of the Park -- it really needs to go.

MOTHER 3: This thing about taking the Ten Commandments off the steps of the library--well that's against freedom of speech!

MOTHERS: Yeah!

NARRATOR: No one in Williamsville understood the juvenile justification system better than Helen Bintliff. And so it was this particular Tuesday, dressed in her exquisitely modest coral bisque cardigan, that Helen Bintliff launched her newest crusade: the battle against the town mill.

SOUND: WALLA MILLING ABOUT, SILENCE AS HELEN SPEAKS.

HELEN: Now as you all know, the town mill has been out of commission for as long, well, as long as I've been here. And in that time, all it has done is sit, fester and glower at us with its ugly, filthy, brick facade.

HELEN: Now I pray you mothers have had the sense not to take your children within a mile of the place, since I know for a fact that unsavory happenings take place within the auspices of its barbed wire fences. And I'm not just talking about broken glass and asbestos here, women! I'm talking about--
(CHOKES UP)

MOTHER 1: (LOW) What is it?

MOTHER 2: (LOW) I don't know...

HELEN: Drugs! And sex!

MOTHERS: GASP!!!

HELEN: Yes... (SNIFFLES, CONTINUES AS IF PHYSICALLY INJURED) I know that some of our troubled sons and daughters--oh, I don't know whose, certainly not yours Denise--well, they've strayed into bad ways in that place. Why, there are condom wrappings everywhere, and graffiti depicting profanity, drugs, and sexual images!

MOTHERS: (GASP, EVEN MORE EXTRAORDINARILY)

MOTHER 1: (LOW) How does she know all this?

MOTHER 2: (LOW) Ssh!

HELEN: And, after dark, when all of us good people are in our homes with our families, creatures that don't dare show their faces by the light of day go there to make shady dealings. Creatures like... Mr. Lovely!

MOTHERS: (GASPS, SHRIEKS, ALMOST MAD COMMOTION)

HELEN: Now tonight, I say to you, this must come to a stop! The mill cannot be allowed to poison our town any longer! We DEMAND that it be torn down!

MOTHERS: Yeah!

HELEN: That it be torn down this instant!

MOTHERS: Yeah!

HELEN: And that we build a new shopping area in its place!

MOTHERS: (MUMBLE FOR A MOMENT)

MOTHER 2: Yeah!

REST OF MOTHERS: Yeah!

HELEN: And who's gonna make it happen?

MOTHERS: Joe Williams!

HELEN: Or we'll have his head!

MOTHERS: Yeah!

HELEN: Alright! Go get 'em, girls!

MOTHERS: (CHEERING)

MOTHER 3: (OVER THE DIN) Now wasn't he proposing a downtown revitalization project that would preserve the cultural history of the mill while bringing more economic activity to the failing downtown businesses that are quickly being put out of work by the suburban sprawl and chain stores?

MOTHER 2: Huh? Come on, we gotta call the mayor!

NARRATOR: Sufficiently satisfied with her impending victory, Helen smiled as she walked out of the middle school, confident she would hear from the mayor before the night was through. It didn't take long for the landslide to hit.

SCENE EIGHT: WILLIAMS HOUSE

(Announcer 2, Joe, Mothers)

ANNOUNCER 2: Watch as the male praying mantis approaches the female with an elaborate dance, before assuming his mating posture on the back of the female. He is hardly aware, however, that she is about to tear off his head.

SOUND: RING! RING!

JOE: (SIGH)

ANNOUNCER: With the male's head removed, she slowly begins to eat the rest of his body...

SOUND: VOLUME ON TV GOES DOWN, PHONE PICKED UP.

JOE: Williams Residence.

MOTHER 2: Now I'll have you know that your position on the mill is horrific, it's practically infanticide, the way you're going about it!

MOTHER 1: You're practically legalizing drugs, you fat prude, by letting our children go to the mill you're...

SOUND: CROSSFADE, BARELY DISTINGUISHABLE RANTS FROM MOTHERS UNDER THE NARRATOR, PHONES RINGING OFF THE HOOK, BUILDING INTO A SOUNDSCAPE THAT ESCALATES LIKE WATER BOILING IN A POT

NARRATOR: It didn't take long for Joe Williams to figure out what was going on. You see, Joe Williams had a very simple system for responding to crises in Williamsville. One call?

JOE: Forget it.

NARRATOR: Five calls?

JOE: Let me know how it turns out.

NARRATOR: Ten calls?

JOE: I'll put someone on it.

NARRATOR: Fifteen calls?

JOE: We understand the situation and are responding accordingly.

NARRATOR: But TWENTY calls?

SOUND: PHONES BOIL OVER.

NARRATOR: Twenty calls meant one of two things had happened. One, a flood had taken out Main St. Or two... Code Level PTA Red.

SOUND: PHONE HUNG UP.

JOE: (LONG, DEEP SIGH)

NARRATOR: Joe had dealt with problems with the PTA before... but this? This was twenty-three callers. This was a code... Bintliff.

SOUND: PHONE PICKED UP AGAIN, BUTTON PRESSED, PHONE RINGS.

JUDITH: (SLEEPILY) Hello?

JOE: Put the coffee back on, Judy, it's going to be a long night.

SCENE NINE: OUTSIDE LIBRARY

(Narrator, Michael)

NARRATOR: It had already been a long day for Michael Burbank. He had suffered the endless ignominy of another day entering the figures of feed sales and negotiating with upset ranchers about recent changes in the pesticide policy. After rereading the opening paragraph of Anna Karenina fourteen times, he stared out the window and realized tonight was the night: tonight he'd burn the library down. While it's safe to say Michael Burbank would have enjoyed Fahrenheit 451, he had, of course, never read it. He had, however, read the Anarchist's Cookbook, and on this fair late September evening, he hauled a bag of fertilizer, a jug of homemade napalm, and a zippo lighter to the steps of this forty ton albatross of his existence.

MICHAEL: At last... I'll be free! HA HA HA HA Haa....
(LOSES ENTHUSIASM) Oh no... not cold feet...

NARRATOR: Though he despised her, he couldn't help imagining the face of Mrs. Jaworski, the librarian who was the bane of his existence, and the best friend of his mother's. Sure, burning the library to rubble would get rid of his late fees, but what if it got rid of her? What if she moved to Florida with all the other old women and left him to fend for himself with his mother, the Queen Mother of Guilt herself?

MICHAEL: Oh... no... She'll spend more time...
visiting me!

NARRATOR: No, Michael thought, the library had to stay.

MICHAEL: I'll just... burn... something else...

SCENE TEN: TWEETER HOUSE

(Narrator, Abigail)

NARRATOR: While Michael Burbank prowled the town looking for an appropriate place to practice his pyrotechnics, Abby Tweeter was finishing up what most of us try not to think about -- sexual relations over the age of 65.

ABIGAIL: Ohhhhh my! Signed, sealed, delivered!

ABIGAIL: (GIGGLES) Oh we've had some special times this last year, Fred, but that was something special, how you just clutched me and didn't say a word... (ECSTATIC SIGH) Oh, why don't you sigh with me Fred? (HOLDS HER BREATH FOR A SECOND) Fred? FRED!

NARRATOR: It didn't take Abigail long to realize that Fred had delivered his last package, and now had a first class ticket to the great post office in the sky.

ABIGAIL: (SIGHS, THEN MATTER-OF-FACTLY) Oh Fred... Now I have to find a place to put your body!

NARRATOR: As Abigail contemplated the necrophiliatic turn of her love life, Michael had chosen the next place to dump his guilt... and napalm.

SCENE ELEVEN: LOVELY'S MOTEL

(Narrator, Helen, Rick, Michael)

MUSIC: NOIR-ISH SAX REELS UP AND UNDER

NARRATOR: Lovely's Motel was an interesting intersection of two worlds--far enough from town to allow for nearly uninterrupted trading of illicit goods and services, but close enough to ship an unwanted in-law during an extended visit. Tonight was business as usual at Lovely's, and as Michael Burbank crept through the unlocked back door and onto the faded pink linoleum, he heard voices just ahead of him.

HELEN: (DISTANT) So, we have a deal?

RICK: (DISTANT) Five grand in unmarked bills, honey, I dig it.

HELEN: Glad to do business with you.

RICK: (SNIFFS) Yeah, real piece of pie. Be there in an hour, and don't be late.

HELEN: If there's one thing I never am, Mr. Lovely, it's late.

RICK: Course not. Just keep that little nose up in the air, never know what you might smell down here.

HELEN: Good night, Mr. Lovely.

SOUND: DOOR OPENED, CLOSED

NARRATOR: Michael froze in the hallway, hearing half of the conversation and filling the rest with inference and common knowledge.

MICHAEL: Figures. Bitch has to be on something.

NARRATOR: It was then that Michael realized that Lovely's Motel wasn't appropriate for his fiery vengeance. What was left of his Catholic upbringing assured him this place was headed to hell anyways, and besides, Rick Lovely had connections. Providing he survived the blaze, it wouldn't be long before he'd take Michael out.

MICHAEL: Isn't there ANY place I can burn down around here?

SCENE TWELVE: TWEETER HOUSE

(Narrator, Abigail)

NARRATOR: Across town, Fred Stoops was fully dressed. His hair was combed, his eyes closed, and he smiled with a secret he took to the grave. All in all, Abigail Tweeter thought he looked extraordinarily comfortable as she slammed down the trunk of her Oldsmobile.

SOUND: TRUNK SLAMMED

NARRATOR: At least, as comfortable as a corpse could be.

ABIGAIL: Oh Fred, you're so handsome. But why not wait until you got home to die?

NARRATOR: As Abigail Tweeter adjusted her rearview mirror, she briefly considered calling the police.

ABIGAIL: No crime was committed...

NARRATOR: She would say

ABIGAIL: ...Save the crime of love!

NARRATOR: Yet, it wasn't the police that Abigail was worried about. It was the opinion of the neighborhood.

SOUND: CAR STARTS, 40S BIG BAND MUSIC COMES ON.

ABIGAIL: When you're this close to the grave with your reputation intact, you can't throw the race.

SOUND: CAR REVERSED SLOWLY, KA-LUMP! OVER A SPEEDBUMP, TERRIBLE CLUNK IN THE TRUNK

ABIGAIL: No sense wasting 73 years of good manners on a dead postman...

SCENE THIRTEEN: BINTLIFF HOUSE

(Narrator, Helen, Joe)

NARRATOR: And as Abigail Tweeter set out to accomplish her morbid deed, Helen Bintliff was walking into her living room... just in time for the phone call she'd predicted.

SOUND: PHONE RINGS, PICKED UP.

HELEN: Hello, Bintliff residence.

NARRATOR: She flicked through the day's mail as the voice hesitantly came on the line.

JOE: Ah, yes, Mrs. Bintliff, this is Mayor Joe Williams.

HELEN: Oh! Mr. Mayor! What an unexpected surprise.

JOE: Yes, um, I suppose it is...

HELEN: What can I do for you my dear?

JOE: Well, you see... I heard about the PTA Meeting tonight...

HELEN: (COYLY) Oh? What part?

JOE: Um... well...

HELEN: The candy bar fundraiser for the marching band? Because it is going so well. Those kids just love their Mr. Goodbars!

JOE: I'm very happy for the band... But that's not it.

HELEN: Oh?

JOE: You see, it's just that I heard... some citizens are concerned about the Town Mill.

HELEN: (FAUX STUNNED) Really? Well, I do remember the matter being under discussion...

JOE: I'm just calling to let you know that I'm aware of the matter and doing everything in my power to work on several possible solutions that will, well, resolve the problem.

HELEN: And none of them resemble your stupid proposal to... revitalize the dump?

JOE: No, of course not.

HELEN: Well it's truly titillating to hear that as representative of the people you take our concerns to heart, Mr. Mayor.

JOE: Don't mention it. There's just one thing.

HELEN: Yes?

JOE: Well, I thought I might impress upon you to make a few phonecalls to alleviate the fears of the voters... err, townspeople.

HELEN: Me, Mr. Mayor? Why's that?

JOE: (SIGHS) Surely you know that you're looked upon as a bit of a... figurehead in the town, Mrs. Bintliff?

HELEN: I'm sorry, I thought that was your job.

JOE: (MAINTAINING TEMPER) I just thought you could call off your---um, assuage the concerns of your fellows in the PTA.

HELEN: As soon as I see it in writing, Mr. Mayor.
Good night!

JOE: (BITTERLY) Good night, Mrs. Bintliff.

SOUND: PHONES CLUNK DOWN.

NARRATOR: With that, Joe Williams XI popped two more Tums and Helen Bintliff's omnipresent smile spread wider across her face. This time, however, it was true joy that shone on her cheeks. The joy of vindication.

(CONT.)

NARRATOR: Having slipped the mayor into her back pocket, tucked her children into bed, and dusted the living room for the second time, Helen grabbed her car keys and an inconspicuous manila envelope from a top cupboard and headed out five minutes ahead of schedule to meet with the town drug dealer. She had clearly never heard that you always wait for the man.

SCENE THIRTEEN: THE MILL - NIGHT

MUSIC: ALMOST CLICHÉ MOVIE SPOOKY MUSIC

NARRATOR: It was a clear night with a full moon, and the gutted interior of the old mill seemed to glow. Though the center of the main room was mostly clear, the edges were stacked with everything from shattered glass, bricks, smashed televisions and microwaves.

MUSIC: CAN SCATTERED ACROSS CONCRETE

NARRATOR: Used condoms, cigarettes and beercans littered one end to the other, causing Helen Bintliff to twitch. She almost regretted that she wouldn't have the chance to mop, vacuum, and dust the place prior to its demolition. As she sat in the dark room, savoring her victory like she would an exquisite filet, she had no idea how right she was.

It was ten minutes after their appointed meeting time that the biggest piece of trash appeared, his Hawaiian shirt flapping around him like a cloak. He snubbed out his cigarette and walked confidently into the main room of the abandoned mill, where Helen Bintliff sat in the shadows humming "You Are My Sunshine."

SOUND: **HUMMING**

RICK: Evenin', Helen.

HELEN: It's rude to keep people waiting.

RICK: Yeah, well, I had some unexpected business.

HELEN: I see. So you have the money?

RICK: Of course I do. (UNDER BREATH) Been a long time since I gave this much cash to a broad.

HELEN: Please mind your tongue Mr. Lovely. I'd hate for these photos to make their way onto the desk of the Williamsville Coronet.

RICK: Yeah, yeah, I get it. Here's your dough.

SOUND: RUSTLING AS PACKAGES EXCHANGED. PACKAGES OPENED AND RUMMAGED THROUGH.

RICK: So it's all here... Gotta ask though, how'd you manage to get just the right photos at just the right time?

HELEN: Oh, just luck, Mr. Lovely. I'm a member of the Neighborhood Watch, of course, and I just happen to belong to the Williamsville Photography Club on the side, in my free time. I was working on a shoot of your rather infamous landmark and just happened to capture some of its more compromising moments on film.

RICK: (COUGHS) So you did. And whaddy need the money for?

HELEN: Oh, I consider it a gift from the Almighty towards Davey's Harvard Fund.

NARRATOR: As Rick Lovely fought to not think too hard about the logic computed in Helen Bintliff's head, a battered Oldsmobile rolled up behind the mill.

SOUND: CAR ENGINE APPROACHES, ARRIVES, TURNS OFF.

ABIGAIL: Perfect!

SOUND: CAR DOOR OPENING, TRUNK OPENING, ROUGH CLOMPING ABOUT.

ABIGAIL: (STRAINED) By the time they find you--

SOUND: THUD!

ABIGAIL: I'll be long gone to Florida.

SOUND: BODY DRAGGED ALONG GROUND, THEN FLOOR.

ABIGAIL: Oh I've missed the sun so much. It's nice there, Fred, why, it'll only be days of sunshine and iced tea until we reunite to laugh over God's junk mail. (PANTING)
Okay, here you go.

SOUND: GROAN, BODY FLOPS, SETTING OFF A NIGHTMARISH AND COMIC MEDLEY OF METAL SOUNDS.

RICK: (OFF) What the hell was that!

HELEN: (OFF) I don't know!

RICK: Think about it, sweetcakes, you just committed a felony too!

HELEN: I didn't do it!

SOUND: ALL SILENCE FOR A SECOND.

HELEN: (ECHOED IN THE DARK) Hello?

NARRATOR: Abigail Tweeter wasn't one for profanity. In fact, she doubted she'd used a naughty word since 1976. But sometimes, the situation warranted it.

ABIGAIL: Fudge bumpkins! (ECHOES PROBABLY MORE THAN SHE INTENDED)

HELEN: Is... someone there?

RICK: Well it wasn't a mouse, Helen.

SOUND: FOOTSTEPS ACROSS A GRAVELLY FLOOR.

HELEN: Abbetweeter!

NARRATOR: For the first time in her life, Abigail Tweeter was at a loss for words.

ABIGAIL: Oh... heh... Hi Helen.

HELEN: And... is that the mail man?

ABIGAIL: Heh... Well of course it is. He wasn't feeling well so we--now wait a minute, didn't I just hear Mr. Lovely?

HELEN: Yes, you see, there's a perfectly logical--

RICK: We're, well, inspecting the place.

HELEN: For the demolition. We're on the committee.

ABIGAIL: Demolition?

NARRATOR: It was at that perfectly awkward moment that Michael ignited his first fertilizer bomb.

SOUND: EXPLOSION, SHARDS OF GLASS AND METAL SENT EVERYWHERE, SOUNDS OF AN INFERNO RAGE UP AROUND THEM.

RICK: Holy shit! (BLANKED OUT DELIBERATELY)

HELEN: AAHHHHHH!

ABIGAIL: Fudge Bumpkins, two times!

HELEN: Let's get out of here!

NARRATOR: In the confusion, Helen grabbed Abigail and threw her over the shoulders like a running back. This lasted as far as the nearest awning which collapsed in a fiery heap as they approached. Helen stood in horror as the flames leapt in.

RICK: (DISTANT) Hey, you idiots! Over here!

NARRATOR: They couldn't see Lovely through the plumes of smoke, but they staggered, coughed, and gagged until unexpectedly strong arms grabbed them and threw them through an open door and out into the night air. Helen lurched forward, almost trampling the old lady, and as quickly as relief swept her body she realized her pockets were just a little lighter.

HELEN: Hey! Rick! The money!

RICK: Catch you later Helen!

NARRATOR: Rick Lovely ran, high on life for once, the incriminating photographs burning to a crisp and the five grand in his back pocket. He was moments from leaping into his Towncar and careening to freedom when another blast lit up the September night.

SOUND: KABOOM! CAR DEBRIS SCATTERS.

RICK: NOOOOOOOOO!!!!!!!! MY ENTIRE STASH WAS IN THERE!!!!

NARRATOR: Without saying another word to each other, Helen and Abigail got in their cars and drove home.

SOUND: FADE AWAY WITH CARS DRIVING OFF, FIRE AND
RICK'S SOBS

SCENE FOURTEEN - EPILOGUE

MUSIC: REPRISE OF ORIGINAL QUIRKY MELODY, UP AND
UNDER

NARRATOR: Three weeks later, Williamsville was essentially back to normal, save for an unexpected disruption in mail and a sudden surge in the rehab clinic's popularity. Abigail Tweeter was looking at nice Florida retirement communities...

ABIGAIL: Aw, well this looks nice, don't it Fred?

NARRATOR: Helen was the chairwoman leading the cleanup of the mill...

HELEN: From the ashes... Williamsville will rise again!

NARRATOR: She had meanwhile begun taking pottery classes, joined an Oprah's Book Club group, and been named "Mother of the Year" by the Coronet. Joe Williams was cruising into another uncontested reelection, and for the first time, had nixed his "I put the Williams in Williamsville" line.

JOE: The people of this town... are on fire!

SOUND: (CROWD RELUCTANTLY CHEERS)

NARRATOR: Rick Lovely found his way to the next sleaziest business: cell sales.

RICK: Oh, this one's great, and it's only got a three year contract...

NARRATOR: And Michael? Well, Michael didn't feel guilt anymore. Not even around his mother. He even had the gall to enter the library and say:

MICHAEL: Hi Mrs. Jaworski!

JAWORSKI: (WEARILY) Hi Michael...

NARRATOR: He took out the same book he'd taken out eighteen times before: "The Idiot's Guide to Cooking." He found reading the different oven temperatures relaxing. No, Michael never felt guilty anymore. After all, in one night, he'd done more than the mayor had managed in four years.

(CONT.)

NARRATOR:

Tradition, yes, it was tradition and its
cousin, routine, that kept the wheels
turning in Williamsville. And happiness?
Well happiness was always in the running for
next year.

MUSIC:

QUIRKY, HAPPY MELODY, UP, OVER, OUT.

THE END