

The Town Crier

A short skit by Shawn Thornburg

Players and setting: a radio stage in the fashion of *Prairie Home Companion*, with two people of any age and gender to play hosts Jesse and Alex Schwarzenegger. (They're intentionally androgynous names for this reason.) This is a companion and follow-up to *Valentine's Ship*, meant to be performed soon after it finishes. This is broken up into sections to enable the players to control the length of the play, so you can jump around and skip or even add sections if needed.

Set and props: two microphones, preferably old radio show style (they do not have to be functional); two pairs of headphones for the announcers.

Jesse

Hello, and welcome to *The Town Crier*, the radio show you've been listening to for decades and can't figure out why!

Alex

And as always, we're your hosts. I'm Alex Schwarzenegger.

Jesse

And I'm Jesse Schwarzenegger.

Both

No relation.

Alex

Today's show is brought to you in part by Captain Mush cereal, the delicious, good-for-you cereal that turns to mush as soon as it touches milk. Remember: Captain Mush—it melts in your bowl, not in your mouth.

Jesse

Also brought to you by Croc-ade, the thirst-quenching sports drink with real crocodile tears in every bottle! Croc-ade, for when you're really really really really thirsty.

Alex

And, just in time for Valentine's Day, today's show has been partly sponsored by Brussels Sprouter's Candy. Brussels Sprouter's is made from 100% organic Brussels sprouts and other delicious vegetables like cabbage, artichoke hearts, asparagus, and broccoli. Brussels Sprouter's Candy, for when you really want to tell that special someone "You need to eat healthier".

Segment 1: Headlines

Jesse

Let's jump right into today's headlines. These are actual headlines ripped straight from today's newspapers. Now the first one is—did you hear about this?—no joke, Woman Saves Bear From Dog Attack.

Alex

Wait, don't you mean she saved a dog from a bear attack?

Jesse

Nope. A bear. She saved it from a dog. Actual headline. The article says this dog was about to rip the bear apart and this brave woman saved it from the jaws of death.

Alex

Oh wow, what a brave thing to do!

Jesse

Yep. Then she gave the teddy bear back to her daughter.

Alex

A teddy bear? You had me going there for a second. I just wonder about germs. Well, moving on. The next headline comes from our very own local newspaper. UFO Lands In Business District, Picks Up Passenger.

Jesse

A real UFO? Do you really believe in those things?

Alex

Unidentified Flying Object? Is it an object? Yes. Is it flying? Yes. Can I identify it? No. It's a UFO!

Jesse

Oh, well, when you put it that way, then yes, I guess we all do.

Alex

Apparently something flew in, landed downtown, and picked up a passenger from a bus stop.

Jesse

Wow! Eyewitness evidence of extraterrestrial life!

Alex

What are you talking about? I've been working with evidence of extraterrestrial life for the past few decades.
(*Stares at Jesse*)

Jesse

(*Stares back*) Let's move on.

Alex

Yes, let's.

Segment 2: Rejected Conversation Hearts

Jesse

In honor of Valentine's Day, you know those candy conversation hearts you give out with little sayings on them?

Alex

Of course.

Jesse

Well, we've compiled a list of some of the rejected sayings from them, so this is the part of the show we like to call **Rejected Conversation Hearts**.

Alex

Let's hear 'em!

(Alternate reading these to the audience, reacting as desired.)

When is dinner?

This tastes like chalk.

Does this smell like chloroform?

Now that football is over, you're my first love again.

Be my alibi.

Take out the trash.

If this tastes like I found it on the sidewalk, there's a reason.

I settled for you.

This is how I feel about you...in someone else's words.

I live with my parents.

Dishes don't wash themselves.

You get to sleep on the couch tonight.

I'm desperate.

Iron my shirt.

You left the seat up again.

I guess I've dated worse.

Try soap.

Those jeans make you look fat.

I maxed out the credit card.

You're creeping me out.

You're not that cute, actually.

Like you as a friend.

I can explain.

You'll do.

Segment 3: Why Ask Why?

Jesse

Alex, do you know about the Philosophy of Hypocrisy and Ambiguity?

Alex

The...what?

Jesse

The Philosophy of Hypocrisy and Ambiguity.

Alex

I just wanted to hear you say it again. I can't say I've heard of that.

Jesse

You'll see when we start it, so let's jump into the part of the show we like to call **Why Ask Why?**

(Alternate reading these to the audience, reacting as desired.)

- Don't sweat the petty things and don't pet the sweaty things.
- I went to a bookstore and asked the saleswoman, "Where's the self-help section"? She said if she told me, it would defeat the purpose.
 - What if there were no hypothetical questions?
 - Is there another word for synonym?
 - Isn't it a bit unnerving that doctors call what they do "practice"?
 - Where do forest rangers go to "get away from it all"?
 - What do you do when you see an endangered animal eating an endangered plant?
 - If a parsley farmer is sued, can they garnish his wages?
 - Would a fly without wings be called a walk?
 - Why do they lock gas station bathrooms? Are they afraid someone will clean them?
 - If a turtle doesn't have a shell, is he homeless or naked?
 - Why don't sheep shrink when it rains?
 - Can vegetarians eat animal crackers?
 - If the police arrest a mime, do they tell him he has the right to remain silent?
 - How do they get the deer to cross at that yellow road sign?
 - What was the best thing before sliced bread?
 - One nice thing about egotists: they don't talk about other people.
 - If you try to fail, and succeed, which have you done?
 - Whose cruel idea was it for the word "lisp" to have an "s" in it?
 - Why is the alphabet in that order? Is it because of that song?
 - If the "black box" flight recorder is never damaged during a plane crash, why isn't the whole airplane made out of that stuff?
 - Why is there an expiration date on sour cream?

Segment 4: Letters From Kooks Like Us

Jesse

Alex, do you remember when we asked the listening audience to send in their funniest anecdotes about Valentine's Day and love?

Alex

Yes, and they responded in spades!

Jesse

Um...no, they responded in letters.

Alex

No, sp—nevermind.

Jesse

Okay. Here are some of the letters we liked best, and this is the section of the show we like to call **Letters From Kooks Like Us**.

(Alternate reading these to the audience, reacting and improvising as desired.)

Here's one from Mary Lou in Wisconsin:

As Valentine's Day approached, I tried to think of an unusual gift for my husband. When I discovered that his favorite red-plaid pants had a broken zipper, I thought I had the "perfect Valentine". I had the pants repaired, and gift-wrapped them. On the package, I put a huge red heart upon which I printed "My Heart Pants for You". I was the surprised one, however, when I saw the same heart taped to our formerly empty, but now overflowing, wood box. On it he had written: "Wood You Be My Valentine?"

Ruth from Washington sent this one in:

I met my husband while I was working in a science library. He came in every week to read the latest journals and eventually decided to take out the librarian instead of the books. After a year and a half of dating, he showed up at the library and started rummaging through my desk. I asked what he was looking for, but he didn't answer. Finally he unearthed one of the rubber stamps I used to identify reference books. "Since I couldn't find the right engagement ring," he said, "this will have to do," and he firmly stamped my hand. Across my knuckles, in capital letters, it read "NOT FOR CIRCULATION."

Here's a cute one from Anne in Kansas:

My boyfriend and I met online and we'd been dating for over a year. I introduced Hans to my uncle, who was fascinated by the fact that we met over the Internet. He asked Hans what kind of line he had used to pick me up. Ever the geek, Hans naively replied, "I just used a regular 56K modem."

This is a nice one from Gene in Idaho:

My friend Mark and I work in a lawn-mower-parts warehouse. Somehow Mark got the idea that his wife did not want a card on Valentine's Day, but when he spoke to her on the phone he discovered she was expecting one. Not having time to buy a card on his way home, Mark was in a quandary. Then he looked at the lawn-mower trade magazines scattered around the office, and got an idea. Using scissors and glue, he created a card with pictures of mowers, next to which he wrote: "I lawn for you mower and mower each day."

Segment 5: The End

Jesse

That's all we have time for today, so in parting—

Alex

(Interrupting) Wait, aren't you forgetting something?

Jesse

What could I possibly be forgetting?

Alex

A word from our final sponsor!

Jesse

We have another sponsor?

Alex

Yes—how could you forget something like that?

Jesse

Who is it?

Alex

(Clears throat) And finally, today's show has been brought to you in part by Helium In A Jar.

Jesse

Helium In A Jar?

Alex

Helium In A Jar, that fun party treat that gets kids giggling, parents laughing, and grandparents slapping their knees. Yes, Helium In A Jar, for when you want to sound like Alvin and the Chipmunks. Helium in a Jar, for when you want to sing like Justin Bieber. Helium In a Jar, that amazing invention from the company that brought you Farts In A Can and Burps In A Bag. Helium In A Jar. Don't delay. Get yours today!

Jesse

And that's all we have time for today, folks, so in parting, remember: I'm Jesse.

Alex

And I'm Alex.

Jesse

And if it's not crying, it's not The Town Crier!