

ADVANTAGE OF A SETTING SUN

By Jazbo Gross

Episode 1

EXT. - PORT SUNLIGHT - DAY

In the middle of a cloudless blue sky, the sun glares through the lens - a dense backdrop of small-town traffic, kids playing and birds chirping.

NARRATOR

The sun is shining brightly here in Port Sunlight. It really is. It's the middle of a warm day in August. It's the year 2018. The houses here look new, pristine. Everything in mint condition, sparkling clean.

Camera tilts down from sun onto one of the red brick houses surrounded by trees and flowerbeds. Our view moves slowly in on the house. Fade to inside of house

INT. - KITCHEN - DAY

Camera tracks towards kitchen table. On the table, a pair of sunglasses and a phone.

NARRATOR (cont.)

Even the birds of Port Sunlight cleanse the air with cheerful chirps. It's bliss here; blissful industrious calm. Away from the hectic hustle of the city.

Camera moves closer to phone. Phone rings. Screen reads "Ma". Hand picks up phone and reads from a 1931 episode of the radio soap "Oxydol's Own Ma Perkins".

FAYE

Alright Ma, I'll tell him. Bye. She says she'll be right over Shuffle. She says it'd be better here than for you to go to the ~~lumberyard~~ factory.

SHUFFLE

OK Faye. It's sure come to be pretty bad when Shuffle Shover can't walk into the ~~Perkins Lumberyard~~ Sunlight Factory, when Ma Perkins can't sit in her own office, in her own place of business and talk to whoever she minds to talk with.

FAYE avoids SHUFFLE's gaze.

FAYE

I guess it's because Cousin Ed and Cousin Sylvester are there and...

SHUFFLE absentmindedly turns on the lights in the kitchen.

SHUFFLE (interrupts)

Sure it's because Cousin Ed and Cousin Sylvester are there, why else?

FAYE turns her head and looks out the window. Well-groomed trees slump heavily outside, spilling their fruits on either side of picket fences separating the backyards of Tudorbethan houses.

SHUFFLE (cont.)

And what's crazy old Shuffle gone and said now that can turn your face away Faye?

FAYE

Nothing Shuffle.

FAYE turns sharply to face *SHUFFLE*.

FAYE

So Ma had a conference with Willy and Evy. Did she find out anything?

SHUFFLE

She found out enough to bring me charging all the way here from ~~Middlesbrough~~ Bolton. Willy and Evy said no, they ain't in any business deal with dear sweet Cousin Sylvester, but Ma thinks...

FAYE (interrupts)

Will and Evy said there wasn't any business deal?

SHUFFLE

But Ma said she ain't satisfied. Will and Evy told her no deal, but Ma got a funny feeling while they were saying it. When Ma told me, I just slammed on my hat and caught the next bus over here.

SHUFFLE takes a step closer to *FAYE*, raising his voice slightly.

FAYE turns to look out the window again.

SHUFFLE (cont.)

Ma's got a feeling Faye! Oh Faye, why do you keep turning away from me and looking out the window? Am I using cuss words that aren't fit for your lady like ears?

FAYE turns to face SHUFFLE again. In an instant shorter than a second, eighty eight years pass through the center of the bright spot in FAYE's eye. She blinks herself back.

FAYE

It's not that Shuffle.

FAYE whisks past SHUFFLE to the other side of the Kitchen and turns off the kitchen lights.

FAYE (cont.)

No of course not. It's just... add it all up. I asked Sylvester if he had a business deal with Willy and Evy, if he knew anything about Willy and Evy's life savings. Sylvester said no. Ma asked Sylvester. He said no to her too. Now Ma's gone to Willy and Evy and they've said no. I don't want to be saying stuff when the whole weight of evidence is against but you hope it is.

SHUFFLE

It ain't just a question of what old Shuffle hopes Faye. It's the question of the truth. And to my dying days that's what I'll believe. That cousin Sylvester went and robbed Willy and Evy out of their last savings.

FAYE

And lied about it...

SHUFFLE

And lied about it! And for some reason or other he's got poor Evy and Willy convinced that they should lie about it too. Lies! From beginning to end, nothing but lies! Oh what's the matter Faye, am I some kind of a lunatic?

Episode 2

EXT. - LADY LEVER ART GALLERY - DAY

Camera tilts down to reveal the fountain outside the Lady Lever Art Gallery. In the distance, we hear the sound of bells as a quarter peal begins to emanate from Christ Church. The church is a ten minute walk from the gallery. The Kensington Ringers are in the bell tower today. They have come all the way from London. Christ Church is their first stop on a busy day of ringing. The wind disturbs the camera's pinhead microphone producing a low-pitched scratchy rumble. It's a very unpleasant sound. The quarter peal is removed from the soundtrack and replaced with an audio recording of the organist practicing inside Christ Church a couple of days later on the 18th of August 2018.

NARRATOR

The sun is shining brightly here in Port Sunlight. It's the middle of the day. Not much has changed, yet every day brings a little something new or unexpected. You'll remember how last time we saw Shuffle and Faye in the kitchen, they were a bit out of sorts. What is going on with Ma? What is it she needs to tell old Shuffle and is Shuffle really onto something? Let's hope for Shuffle that there is some light that guides him, if only a dim glow. What do you think? Will we ever know the truth about the cousins?

FAYE and SHUFFLE walk the long flowerbed promenade from the war memorial to the gallery. It was designed in a straight line so that the path would not interfere with the free flow of thought; an assembly line of inspiration.

FAYE

What are you asking me to believe Shuffle, that cousin Sylvester has some sort of hold on Willy and Evy so he can get them to lie, get them to lie to Ma? To Ma of all people! You are asking me to believe that Sylvester is a thief, a swindler. And we have no evidence Shuffle. What do we have to go on? You yourself say you feel it, but you've had feelings about the cousins from the minute they got to town Shuffle.

SHUFFLE sends FAYE a suspicious look.

SHUFFLE

So, there we have it. Spoke out real plain and simple. Faye believes that Shuffle is a lunatic.

FAYE (interjects)

Oh no...

FAYE and SHUFFLE pass the fountain and enter the gallery.

INT. - LADY LEVER ART GALLERY - DAY

FAYE and SHUFFLE pick up a floor map at reception and proceed to the main gallery. SHUFFLE takes FAYE aside. They stand in front of a plaque with a quote from the late Lord Leverhulme. It reads: "Art has always been to me a stimulating influence; it has always taught me without upbraiding me; elevated me without humbling me; and appealed to me because of the fact that only the best and truest in art survives..."

SHUFFLE

Anyhow let me just say. On the telephone Ma told me that she's beginning to get the same feeling I got Faye.

FAYE

Yes, that's what she said.

FAYE sets off towards the east wing of the gallery where the oval sculpture room is found.

SHUFFLE

Yes.

FAYE

I don't like any of this stuff. I don't like looking for plots and counterplots. I don't like thinking along that line: did he lie, did she lie, did this one take that one's money. It's all so ugly, so cheap. I feel so cheap just thinking such thoughts.

SHUFFLE grabs FAYE's wrist and stops her in her tracks. SHUFFLE is speaking urgently in a hushed voice. In the background we see a painting entitled 'Bubbles' by Sir John Everett Millais. Our view moves in closer as SHUFFLE implores FAYE.

SHUFFLE

Maybe you ain't the only one who's been made to feel cheap Faye. Do you think I enjoy thinking such bad thoughts about Ma's cousins, Pa's cousins?

FAYE attempts to wrest herself from SHUFFLE's grip, but he holds on tighter and pulls her closer.

SHUFFLE (cont.)

Maybe that's the terrible thing about cheapness Faye. It kind of
rubs off on whoever touches it!

FAYE drops to the floor, pulling SHUFFLE down with her. She manages to twist around his body forcing his hand to let go. She locks SHUFFLE's arm behind his back.

FAYE

And it's the cousins that are responsible for all of this? I don't know. I just don't know.

SHUFFLE who is now belly down with FAYE on top of him struggles for a bit, then relaxes after FAYE continues to apply force to his twisted arm. We move closer to FAYE, beads of sweat on her face. She looks down at SHUFFLE with a pained expression. SHUFFLE signals his surrender to FAYE by tapping the floor three times with his free hand.

INT. - BRIDGE COTTAGE - DAY

FAYE slowly releases the hold on SHUFFLE's arm

FAYE (cont.)

Wait a minute, was that the front door?

EXT. - LADY LEVER ART GALLERY - DAY

We see MA standing at the fountain, staring transfixed into the water. Time seems to slow down as she just stands there, staring into the mists of the water like flames. The water circulating in the fountain reminds her of a story an old lady told her at church last week about the public baths of Port Sunlight. The baths were turned into a garden center in the seventies. It used to be an outdoor heated pool where the residents of Port Sunlight could swim in the warm water. When one part of the soap factory was decommissioned - the part that produced the original Sunlight Soap - the factory no longer had a need for the hot water tanks that were used in the soap production. As a consequence, the warm water in the swimming pool was also lost. The swimming pool was designed as an extension of the factory, the excess heat from the soap production being transferred in underground pipes to heat the pool. MA forgot to ask the old lady for the date of when this all happened. Standing there staring into the fountain, MA thinks to herself that she would prefer a heated pool to a garden center.

Episode 3

INT. - BRIDGE COTTAGE - DAY

The floors are carpeted, William Morris wallpaper. We are in the house once home to Lord Lever and his wife. It now functions as a community center with a small store that sells knick-knacks and memorabilia. Most of the rooms look like they are set up to host a company board meeting, but the floors creak, the windows slump and there is something fat about the walls that makes the white table and office chairs seem pasted in.

NARRATOR

The sun is shining brightly here in Port Sunlight. It's the middle of the day. Not much has changed, yet every day brings a little something new or unexpected. You'll remember how last time we saw Shuffle and Faye in the gallery, tempers were running high. What is going on with Ma? What is it she needs to tell old Shuffle and is Shuffle really onto something? Let's hope for him that there is some light that guides him, if only a dim glow. What do you think?

Will we ever know the truth about the cousins?

MA

Faye? You inside?

FAYE lets go of SHUFFLE and gets to her feet. SHUFFLE follows.

FAYE (to SHUFFLE)

That's Ma in the Kitchen.

FAYE helps SHUFFLE to his feet.

FAYE (louder)

We're here in the parlour Ma!

FAYE looks at SHUFFLE.

FAYE

I'm sorry if I did anything to give you offence.

SHUFFLE

Why Faye, you know you couldn't give me offence if you tried.

Morning Ma, you made it back.

SHUFFLE brushes his jacket, dusting it off like a rug, then stretches out his legs and tugs on the fabric to get rid of the

creases. He gives his jacket a quick brush just as MA enters the room.

MA

Good morning Shuffle. Hello Faye.

FAYE

Hello

MA

Cousin Sylvester was going up the street in the truck and he gave me a ride. Oh man that truck seems...

MA holds one hand up and wiggles her fingers while looking back over her shoulder.

MA (cont.)

I didn't realise it was so rattly.

SHUFFLE

It wasn't rattly two months ago when I was driving it.

MA

You mean that cousin Ed and Sylvester made it rattly? Hmmm, Maybe. Well that's not important. Sit down Shuffle, you have to get back to ~~Middlesbrough~~ Bolton. I know I got to get back to the office too.

FAYE, who has been listening intently to MA comes to herself and slips out of the room with a unconvinced shake of the head.

INT. - KITCHEN - DAY

FAYE stops in the doorway and looks around. We hear the conversation between MA and SHUFFLE continue from the other room. FAYE leaves the kitchen through the back door.

EXT. - COURTYARD - DAY

FAYE breathes in some fresh air and looks at the red bricks that are piled in the middle of the courtyard. They are for refurbishing the house - a project she has taken on - and they are not any kind of brick. You can't buy these bricks with stolen savings. They are period bricks. They are cheap but hard to come by. You have to be on the lookout and grab them when other old houses are being taken down. Then each individual brick has to be carefully cleaned of excess mortar before it can be reused. It's a painstakingly slow process but it's worth the effort for getting that pristine period look; that old but new; that neither here nor there.

INT. - BRIDGE COTTAGE - DAY

SHUFFLE

Yes Ma. So you went to see Willy and Evy this morning and Willy and Evy said no they didn't take their money out of the bank and hand it over to Sylvester.

MA rubs her head with one hand and slowly looks back up at SHUFFLE.

MA

That's right. Willy and Evy said they didn't. Shuffle, I don't know if I told you this but days and days ago I asked cousin Sylvester to his face and I believe so did Faye. And Sylvester said to her and to me both, he don't know nothing about Willy and Evy's money. So, when you add it all up..

SHUFFLE (interrupts)

When you add it all up Ma, we ain't got a speck of evidence against cousin Sylvester, is that what you are saying?

FAYE enters the room again.

FAYE

It's exactly what I just finished saying. Ma?

MA

Oh, it ain't only this particular matter Shuffle; Willy and Evy's money. Willy and Evy are grown folks. They can do with their money like they please. It's the lesson behind this matter which has gotten me mixed up. Not the word I wanted, lesson, it's... The conclusion, the answer to the final thing that comes out of all of it. Because what you're saying Shuffle is that Anita's boy, our cousin, and maybe the whole family, Anita's boy, Anita herself and cousin Ed; that they're liars, worse than liars.

MA pauses and shakes her head. She walks over to the window and looks out, her back now turned to SHUFFLE and FAYE.

MA (cont.)

Bad enough that they lied to me and Faye but that they took that money for themselves. What do you think? Because that's it Shuffle. If it all comes together like you've been suggesting that's the answer. My cousins are thieves and liars and cheap. And they've come to this town only to do all of us harm.

Episode 4

INT. - LEVERHULME HOTEL & SPA - DAY

Our view passes over the patterned carpet of the Leverhulme Hotel & Spa. An oddly sanitized Art Deco in purple, leather and glass. The tables are set immaculately. Here used to be the hospital of Port Sunlight. From this room they would roll tuberculosis patients onto the veranda for the fresh air to cure them of their illness. Fresh Wirral air is still a selling point around here.

NARRATOR

The sun is shining brightly here in Port Sunlight. It's the middle of the day. Not much has changed, yet every day brings a little something new or unexpected. You'll remember how last time we saw Shuffle, Faye and Ma in the Bridge Cottage. Ma was not too happy with Shuffle's theory about the cousins. Is Shuffle really onto something? Let's hope for him that there is some light that guides him, if only a dim glow. What do you think? Will we ever know the truth about the cousins?

MA, FAYE and SHUFFLE are around the table for lunch. SHUFFLE seems agitated and has a grave expression.

SHUFFLE

It ain't no secret my feelings on the subject of the cousins. Yes Ma, I wouldn't put it past Cousin Ed and Cousin Sylvester to do exactly like you just said. Not only lie but steal and cheat. And hurt. Yes, that's what I've been saying for months now.

We see FAYE's hand in a close up dipping a bag of Lipton Green Tea in her cup of hot water. MA is reading the newspaper. It's the Wirral Globe from Wednesday the 4th of April 2018. SHUFFLE notices a Specsavers add for a free eye test on the front page. MA puts the newspaper down on the glass table and looks away, disappointed.

MA

Oh Shuffle, oh.

SHUFFLE

And Ma Perkins is turning her face away from me to look out the ~~kitchen~~ window. Ma, not two hours ago you spoke to me on the phone and it was you who said that you had a funny feeling about the answers that Willy and Evy give to you. And for the first time in months and months and months it seemed like you were the old Ma

Perkins and I came steaming over here a mile a minute to talk to you about it. Didn't I hear you right on the telephone Ma?

There is some toast on SHUFFLE's plate but he hasn't touched it. FAYE scoops up egg with a teaspoon and eats it. A drop of yolk sticks to the corner of her mouth and trickles. MA looks straight at SHUFFLE.

MA

You heard me right Shuffle. But you see, I just spoke to Cousin Sylvester and Cousin Ed again. Just now, just after I called you Shuffle.

FAYE

Did you ask them Ma?

SHUFFLE notices the yolk on FAYE's chin, a perfect yellow droplet.

Ma

Yes, I asked them. I put it real simple. Do either of you know anything, anything at all about Willy and Evy's money? They both said no. See, there we are. Again and again the answer has been no. Oh Shuffle, isn't it possible that you are mistaking?

SHUFFLE is no longer listening to MA. Her voice seems to fade away. And instead of being replaced by other sounds it is the yolk that grows in his eye. The fullness of the yolk glistens and grows with the fullness of his conviction and as it reaches the outer limits of his visual field, it slows and shines, bright brilliant amber.

MA (cont.)

You are saying these terrible terrible things about the cousins and without a single shred of proof. Why are you putting on your hat Shuffle?

SHUFFLE gets up from the table and walks away.

FAYE

Shuffle!

SHUFFLE stops in the doorway.

MA

You aren't mad at me are you?

Our view moves in on SHUFFLE as he turns to face MA and FAYE, pale and determined.

SHUFFLE

No Ma, I ain't mad at you, but you got such emotions when it come to them cousins, you keep saying we ain't got no proof. OK I'm setting out to get some proof. From Willy! If necessary I'll hold that boys head in a bucket of water until he gives *me* his life savings, unless he's already given them to Sylvester. But I am getting at the truth! Cousins, cousins cousins! They ruined my life. They tried to ruin Marietta's life. And to the soles of my shoes I believe they ruined Willy and Evy's life. Won't you be satisfied until they ruin Ma Perkins too? And Faye? I'm going out to get some proof. And Ma, I won't be back. I'm never going to come back again until I can look you in the eye Ma Perkins, and prove to you, your cousins are like I say. They're crooks!