Operation Punchline

B Alan Bourgeois · Opening excerpt · 1 of 2

The basement of The Comedy Cellar smelled like stale beer, burnt pizza, and crushed dreams—exactly the kind of place where comedians felt at home. Around a sticky table, a dozen of the sharpest, funniest, and most cynical minds in comedy sat in silence, nursing drinks and staring at Vinny J, head writer for The Late Night Show with Pete McGavin.

He exhaled, running a hand through his unwashed hair. “Alright, let’s just say it. The President needs to be taken down a peg. Or a hundred.”

Maria Sanchez, TikTok’s reigning impressionist queen, cocked her head. “You mean like… roasted into retirement?”

“No,” Vinny said, leaning forward. “I mean broken. Mentally. Emotionally. Completely. What if we hit him with so much satire, so much relentless ridicule, that his ego just… collapses?”

The room went still.

“Whoa, whoa, whoa—” Greg Langston, the face behind Twitter’s biggest parody account, @COVFEFEmemes69, waved his hands. “Are we talking psychological warfare? Because I feel like that’s more of a CIA thing, and I just learned how to do my taxes properly, so I’d rather not get involved in—”

“Not warfare,” Vinny interrupted. “We’re comedians, not the freakin’ military. I mean, what if we just laughed him into a nervous breakdown?”

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Silence.

Then, Maria leaned forward, eyes narrowing. “Go on.”

Vinny grinned. “The guy hates being made fun of. His blood pressure skyrockets whenever we mock him. What if we weaponized that? What if we created a tsunami of satire so overwhelming, so inescapable, that he can’t even look at Twitter without seeing his tiny hands trending?”

A pause.

Then, from the back, Todd—the weird, conspiracy-obsessed intern who once tried to pitch a sitcom about sentient deep-fried pickles—nodded sagely. “Oh, like in Who Framed Roger Rabbit when the bad guy literally melts from laughter.”

Vinny pointed. “Exactly.”

Greg sipped his beer, considering. “So, basically… instead of an assassination, we do a humor-induced meltdown?”

Vinny smirked. “More like a clown-pocalypse.”

A single chuckle escaped from Maria before she caught herself. “Jesus Christ, this is insane.”

But the wheels were turning in everyone’s heads.

“Think about it,” Vinny pressed on. “The man lives in his own propaganda bubble. He only watches networks that worship him, only surrounds himself with sycophants. He’s never truly had to sit through real humiliation—just whiny press articles and protests, and even then, he turns them into campaign slogans.”