

As I scanned the various show-business-related items, my feelings kept changing abruptly: if a piece jumped out that I had a connection to, I felt a sweet rush, because it meant that a sizable payment would be coming soon in the mail. Then, almost simultaneously with the uplifting feeling, I was overcome with a sinking rush as I considered the possible consequences: that with one nasty twist in the way a story went, or was perceived, my career in show business could be ended. Also as I turned pages I remained in a state of fear and shame, suspecting that what the tabs had done (or could do) with a piece that I'd had some dealings with would personally wound a star, or a star's family, in the worst way.

On many tabloid delivery days, after I had reviewed the current week's offerings and found that no contributions of mine had been twisted too far out of shape, I experienced a sense of relief that bordered on joy (until next week), thankful that nobody had been hurt or damaged on my account and that (for now) there'd probably be no legal or career repercussions. Also, week after week, when the tabs came out I prayed that my hard-earned publicist contacts either wouldn't catch a certain item that I'd had to do with, or if they had indeed caught one, they wouldn't put my face to it or would look the other way.

On many of those days I couldn't bring myself up to the examination. At the market I skirted past the news rack deliberately; I simply did not want to know. But subsequently, as I walked home with the groceries, I lightened up and justified the whole process and operation.

"What difference does it make what one writes or supplies about celebrities, or how celebrities are quoted? The celebrities and the publicists are using me, and the tabloids and I are using them back. When you get right down to it, we're all pimps, we're all whores."

Robert Kerwin's celebrity profiles, essays, short stories, and travel and op-ed pieces have appeared in *Playboy*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Travel & Leisure*, *Ellipsis*, *Chicago Quarterly Review*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Chicago Tribune Magazine*, and *Los Angeles Times Calendar*. Born in Chicago, he now lives in northern California and most recently has been working on a memoir, *The House That Saved My Life*.

ROS CUTHBERT

Change Partners, 2017
Collage and watercolor, 16 x 11 in



COURTESY THE ARTIST