

# **BUT I'M STILL SLIGHTLY CONFUSED ©**

A Comedic Stage Play In Two Acts

By

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ISBN 978-0-9724891-7-1

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March 5, 2015

## Synopsis

Reggy, a 65-year-old retired steel plant laborer, has for years patronized his neighborhood pub, "Shorty's Bar". Within these familiar surroundings, Reggy has, on a nightly basis, enjoyed one or two beers, accompanied by some relaxed conversation with the proprietor, Shorty. During countless evenings they have been able to resolve most of the world's pressing problems, usually prior to closing time.

Reggy has recently begun to perceive that society is beginning to move at an uncontrollable pace that may soon transform him into an abandoned and useless anachronism. Is he the only person on the face of the earth who doesn't carry an iphone? Doesn't anyone else still pay for gas with cash? It's probably the cashless ones who rely on that sissy-la-la E-Z pass system. Does anyone else know how to read a roadmap? The windows on his Pontiac continue to work just fine with the original roll down hand crank.

He has resided here in town all his life, yet some things are becoming unfamiliar and confusing. He just visited his doctor, and now Reggy's not quite sure if his medical plan still covers services it once insured. New products are being advertised on TV, but he doesn't quite know what they are or whether he needs any. He paid into the social security system for half a century, but now, just when he could use some of the money that was previously taken from him, there are rumors his portion may have vanished. How could that be?

Shorty usually has a plausible answer for these and other concerns of the day. Reggy will drink a beer or two tonight while Shorty tries to make some sense out of the chaos, just as he has done countless times before. There's probably no need to worry.

## Dedication

To Ann M. Heselwood. Without your kindness, this play would not have been possible.

## Cast Description

### *BUT I'M STILL SLIGHTLY CONFUSED*

#### SCENE ONE: *The Wartectomy*

##### Six On-Stage Actors

REGGY: A sixty-five year old retired steel worker. He is confused by the fast-paced changes in society that have left him a stranger in an alien world. He will appear in every scene.

SHORTY: A sixty-five year old bartender and proprietor of *Shorty's Bar*. He is Reggy's confidant and friend. He will appear in every scene.

WALDO: A sixty-five year old retired steel worker who sits silently at Shorty's bar. He will appear in every scene.

TOOTIE: An older woman who is one of the "regulars" patronizing Shorty's bar.

RECEPTIONIST: She works at a dermatologist's office. She is rather stupid, but is too stupid to realize that fact. (She can be any age, and is a blond or red-head).

A PATIENT: He or she is wrapped in bandages, and moans once in a while. (Can be any age. Not a speaking part.)

#### SCENE TWO: *The Cell Phone*

##### Nine On-Stage Actors

REGGY, SHORTY, TOOTIE, and WALDO

WELL-DRESSED MAN: He attends a funeral service.

CATHOLIC PRIEST: He officiates during a funeral service. (Can be any age.)

FIRST MOURNER: (Can be any age and either sex.)

SECOND MOURNER: (Can be any age and either sex.)

WIDOW: An older lady who has just been widowed.

SCENE THREE: *A Day At The Races*

Nine On-Stage Actors

One Off-Stage Announcer

REGGY, SHORTY, TOOTIE and WALDO

VENDOR: He or she sells newspapers at the race track. (Can be any age and any sex.)

GUS: A patron at the betting parlor. He is an older man and down on his luck.

SAL: A patron at the betting parlor. He is an older man, Gus's friend, and down on his luck.

MAN IN THE CAGE: An employee at the betting parlor. (Can be either sex if necessary and any age.)

NEXT BETTER IN LINE: A gambler. (Can be either sex and any age.)

OFF-STAGE ANNOUNCER: An off-stage voice describing the race.

SCENE FOUR: *The Steel Plant*

Six On-Stage Actors

REGGY, SHORTY, TOOTIE and WALDO

GUSHTY: An older male steel plant locker room attendant.

EXECUTIONER: A male steel plant foreman.

SCENE FIVE: *The Cheapstake*

Four On-Stage Actors

REGGY, SHORTY, TOOTIE and WALDO

SCENE SIX: *The Hockey Game*  
Six On-Stage Actors  
One Off-Stage Announcer

REGGY, SHORTY, TOOTIE and WALDO

BUTCH: A 20-something male spectator at the hockey game.

FEMALE SPECTATOR: (Not a speaking part).

ANNOUNCER: Off-Stage voice describing the hockey game.

SCENE SEVEN: *The Transcribulator*  
Five On-Stage Actors

REGGY, SHORTY, TOOTIE and WALDO

MRS. RAGSDALE: A computer sales lady who has all the answers. (Can be any age.)

SCENE EIGHT: *I'm Confused*  
Nine On-Stage Actors

REGGY, SHORTY, TOOTIE and WALDO

CLERK 1, 2 AND 3: Delicatessen Clerks, who can be either male or female

LADY IN WHEELCHAIR: A patron at the delicatessen

SCENE NINE: *The Waitress*  
Six On-Stage Actors

REGGY, SHORTY, TOOTIE and WALDO

AGNES: A weary 40-something waitress.

JUDGE: A judge at a hearing. (Preferably an older male.)

## **BUT I'M STILL SLIGHTLY CONFUSED**

### **FIRST SCENE – THE WARTECTOMY**

(Reggy, a sixty-five-year-old retired steelworker, sits on a bar stool as he nurses a beer at his neighborhood pub, “Shorty’s.” Shorty, a sixty-five-year-old bartender, dressed in an apron, stands on the other side of the bar, polishing a glass. Another sixty-five-year-old male patron, Waldo, sits silently at the end of the bar, nursing a beer.

An older female patron, Tootie, walks on stage carrying a copy of the *Midnight Star* newspaper. She sits upon her usual bar stool and begins to silently study her newspaper as Shorty pours her a beer.)

SHORTY:

**“What’s happening, Tootie? Anything important?”**

TOOTIE:

**“It’s all here in print. I don’t know how I’d ever keep up without my newspaper. Don’t it make you wonder how this here *Midnight Star* always seems to get the big ‘scoops’ before any other news source? Listen to this: (Tootie reads from her paper) ‘Murderer confesses to parrot who tells all’.”**

REGGY:

**“Some jailbird spilled the beans?”**

TOOTIE:

**“Don’t just take my word for it. This exclusive picture is worth a thousand words. (She holds up the paper.) There’s an actual photo of the bird perched on the witness stand, its right wing up in the air as it takes the oath. The article says the bird swore to tell the truth, so the judge permitted the testimony. The jury apparently believed the bird, rather than**

the defendant, 'cause they only deliberated about half an hour before they returned with a verdict of guilty."

REGGY:

"That don't seem very fair. If I were the defendant, I'd raise a squawk."

SHORTY:

"I don't understand how the other major legitimate news sources, like the *Police Gazette* and the *National Inquirer* fail to report these blockbuster events."

TOOTIE:

"And listen to this other important headline: 'I flew half a mile in a tornado while clinging onto my toilet'.

SHORTY:

"That's simply amazing!"

TOOTIE:

(Tootie read from her newspaper.) "Diana Kneebone of rural Oklahoma relates how she was ripped without warning from her home by a twister and survived. She flew farther on her first solo flight than the Wright Brothers, even though she was weighted down by a porcelain bowl. How far she might have traveled unaccompanied by the plumbing fixture was left unanswered. Upon her return to earth she was quoted as saying 'I don't know how long I was up there, but it must have been a few minutes. Then I was struck by debris and lost my grip on the toilet seat during touchdown.'"

REGGY:

"And you believe that report?"

TOOTIE:

**“It’s a copyrighted story, in print no less, so its gotta be true. Why would they lie?”**

SHORTY:

**“Did you guys see the article in last week’s *Star* about social security?”**

TOOTIE:

**“If the article wasn’t front page, like the reports on flying toilets and testifying parrots, I might-a missed it.”**

SHORTY:

(Shorty reaches for a copy of a newspaper lying on the bar. He opens the newspaper and reads aloud.) **“Psychic predicts social security too big to fail despite growing trillion dollar deficit.”**

REGGY:

**“Ain’t that exactly what they said about the steel plant? Too big to fail? A century of rolling red-hot steel, and then one day – poof, it was gone – just a memory. (Reggy snaps his fingers.) Who’d have guessed the plant would actually go belly-up? Nothin’s a sure bet no more.”**

SHORTY:

**“Just death and taxes.”**

REGGY:

**“I’m starting to get jittery about my social security checks. Paid in for fifty years, but it may just be a huge governmental Ponzie scheme dreamed up by Washington.”**



SHORTY:

**“I don’t think you need to worry, pal. The next generation may get short-changed, but not old coots like us.”**

REGGY:

**“I’m serious, Shorty. When Roosevelt dreamed up the social security system, the average life span was sixty-five years, everybody worked, and very few people collected. Them who were the first to receive a check hadn’t even put in a dime. The government’s been playing catch-up ever since. But if the steel plant can disappear, so can my fifty years of payments - each stinkin’ deduction involuntarily taken from me before I even got my hands on it.”**

SHORTY:

**“I think your money’s safe. See, the government’s gotta fool-proof plan. I read all about it in last week’s *Midnight Star*, ‘cause inquiring minds wanna know.”**

TOOTIE:

**“You read what?”**

SHORTY:

**“Why social security is solid as the Rock of Gibraltar, even though there ain’t actually enough money to go ‘round. See, it’s all based on a unique theory of economics known as the positive retention of negative cash flow!”**

TOOTIE:

**“The positive retention of negative cash flow?”**

SHORTY:

**“Here’s the example that was reported in the *Midnight Star*, and them folks never lie:  
Three men go into a hotel seeking a room for the night. With me so far?” (Reggy shakes his head affirmatively.)**

REGGY:

**“I suppose so.”**

SHORTY:

**“The clerk charges the three men thirty dollars for the room, so each man hands the clerk a ten dollar bill. They receive a room key and take the elevator up to their quarters.”**  
(Reggy shakes his head up and down.)

REGGY:

**“Fair enough.”**

SHORTY:

**“But then the honest clerk realizes he has unintentionally overcharged the three men. It’s only a twenty-five dollar room. So he calls over the bellhop and hands him five one dollar bills and tells the bellhop to go upstairs and give the men back the five dollars they was overcharged.”**

TOOTIE:

**“That makes sense.”**

SHORTY:

**“As the bellhop takes the elevator upstairs, he thinks to himself ‘these three guys don’t know they’ve been overcharged and they probably won’t give me a tip for my troubles. I’m gonna keep two bucks for myself.’ So the dishonest bellhop pockets two dollars. Then he knocks on the door to the room, and hands each man a one dollar bill.”**

REGGY:

**“So...?”**

SHORTY:

**“So each man only paid nine dollars for the room.”**

REGGY:

(Proud he has comprehended such complex mathematics) **“That’s right. They each had paid ten dollars, but they each got a dollar back.”**

SHORTY:

**“So three times nine equals ...”** (Shorty waits for Reggy)

REGGY:

**“Twenty-seven ...”**

SHORTY:

**“The bellhop kept two bucks ...”**

REGGY:

**“Okay. Twenty seven plus two is twenty-nine ...”**

SHORTY:

**“So where’s the other dollar?”**

REGGY:

(Confused) **“What other dollar?”**

SHORTY:

**“Each man paid nine dollars for a total of twenty-seven. The bellhop kept two - that’s twenty-nine. Where’s the other buck?”**

REGGY:

(Slowly counts on his fingers, then looks up) **“I dunno! Where is it?”**

SHORTY:

**“See, that’s the beauty part and that’s why social security ain’t never gonna go broke. That extra buck gets included as part of the overall positive retention of negative cash flow. And that’s what social security does. The extra money that no one seems to miss and isn’t actually there is retained to fund the deficit!”**

REGGY:

**“That’s amazin’.”**

SHORTY:

**“Yup. The economist who was able to locate money that doesn’t really exist has done a marvelous job protecting us from the future. It’s possible that with time nobody will have to work because we’ll all simply collect benefits.”**

TOOTIE:

**“So you believe them government bean counters who claim that Social Security is here to stay?”**

SHORTY:

**“Sure, ‘cause it’s too big to fail. Anyway, Washington’s been printing money for years, and they haven’t run out of ink yet.”**

REGGY:

**“It’s not that I don’t believe you, Shorty, but sometimes a little skepticism is justifiable. I can still remember the very first time someone in charge of things handed me a line of bullshit. The experience changed my life. After that, I figured I’d draw my own conclusions.”**

SHORTY:

**“Did you have some sorta life-altering experience?”**

REGGY:

**“Never to be forgotten. It happened during my very first day of school. Kindergarten, to be exact. I was just four years old and ready to begin my formal education. It was the first time I had ever been separated from my mother. I was vulnerable, and she knew it.”**

SHORTY:

**“Who?”**

REGGY:

**“The teacher, Miss Ziegler. She began to read us a story about this boy who had decided never to grow up.”**

SHORTY:

**(Excited) “Peter Pan!”**

REGGY:

**“You’ve heard of him? So he decides to teach some other kids in his neighborhood how to fly, and off they go to Never Never Land. There they meet a cast of characters with little in common, including Tinkerbell, a fairy who dispenses special pixie dust...”**

SHORTY:

**“And a crocodile with a clock ticking in its stomach ...”**

REGGY:

**“That’s right, and Captain Hook and his gang of congenial pirates. There was no reason at this particular point in time to doubt anything Miss Ziegler had related. If Peter Pan could fly, maybe with luck our paths might cross, and he’d teach me, too. The Croc with the stomach-proof clock was plausible, too. They eat anything, and now that this amphibian had digested a timepiece, it made sense why this particular reptile was known as a croc-o-dile. There was just one other minor point.”**

SHORTY:

**“What was that?”**

REGGY:

**“Apparently the croc had also eaten Captain Hook’s hand, requiring the Captain to replace his missing appendage with a hook – hence the name. And that’s when things began to unravel.”**

SHORTY:

**“They did?”**

REGGY:

**“Miss Ziegler stopped to ask if there were any questions. So I raised my hand and inquired what was Captain Hook’s name before he lost his hand? Obviously if he made it through some Naval Academy, he had to have had all his body parts when he matriculated, or he wouldn’t have been able to tie fancy knots or swing from ropes, much less engage in intramural pirate sports. Zieger stops her rambling long enough to studder ‘What did you say?’, so I asked her again: what was Hook’s name before he lost his hand? Know what she said?”**

SHORTY:

**“I haven’t the foggiest.”**

REGGY:

**“Captain Hand. CAPTAIN HAND! I had just been served up my first line of bullshit – by an authority figure no less, and I was only four! Was she suggesting that every time someone in the maritime service lost a body part, their name changed? Imagine the possibilities – all the way from gender transformation surgery to baldness. So I called her on it. Everything up to that point out of her mouth had been plausible. The flying, the**

clock digestion, the pixie dust. But the name transformation – that was bullshit and she knew it. Unfortunately, my inquiry resulted in my flunking Peter Pan 101. But that's why I question whether our social security is still safe. Having dealt with one croc of shit too many, I wonder if the whole house of cards is about to crumble at our feet. Take our cockamamy health care system."

TOOTIE:

"What about it?"

REGGY:

I'm still kinda confused. Maybe I got coverage and maybe I don't. It's so hard to tell."

TOOTIE:

"What do ya mean?"

REGGY:

(Reggy dismounts from his barstool as he continues to talk to Shorty) **"It happened last week at my dermatologist's office. There was some unexpected complications.** (Reggy walks across stage to the reception area at a doctor's office. A receptionist sits at a desk, protected by thick glass. Above her head is a sign that announces: *Please be patient. We're running a little late.* The receptionist is busy filing her nails. Another patient, similar in appearance to a mummy, and wrapped in medical bandages from head to foot, sits nearby with a set of crutches. This patient periodically moans as he tries unsuccessfully with bandaged hands to turn the pages of a stack of papers. Reggy momentarily stares at the patient, and then cautiously approaches the receptionist who is still filing her nails.)

**Reginald Beamstorfer here for my two p.m. appointment. I have a wart or something growing on my left - "** (Reggie points at his left buttock as the receptionist looks up and interrupts.)

RECEPTIONIST:

**"Not so fast, pal. First, we gotta determine if you qualify!"**

REGGY:

**"Qualify? For what?"**

RECEPTIONIST:

**"A wartectomy."**

REGGY:

**"Sure I do. See, I've been waitin' six months for this appointment to have this little thing cut off of my - "** (Reggy turns to point at his left buttock as the receptionist again interrupts.)

RECEPTIONIST:

**"Social?"**

REGGY:

**"I suppose so. I rarely get into fights. But what's that got to do with this wart on my - "**

RECEPTIONIST:

**"Your social security number, bub! Nine digits."**

REGGY:

**"Why do you need that? It's private."**

RECEPTIONIST:

**"So we can confirm that you are who you say you are. That's why we take a mug shot."**

REGGY:

**"What if I wasn't who I said I was?"**

RECEPTIONIST:

**"See, that's exactly the point! Then we'd be removing someone else's wart from your ass, and then you'd probably refuse to pay. It happens all the time."**



REGGY:

**"Look, Lady, I'll gladly send you a check when I get your bill."**

RECEPTIONIST:

**Ohh (she muses to herself) ... one of those trouble-makers. If you're not paying by pre-approved medical insurance bonded wire transfer, I'll need the name of your bank, stockbroker, and personal guarantor, your business address, home phone, business phone, cell phone, fax number, email password, name of closest friend or relative responsible for your funeral arrangements, a copy of your most recent credit card statement, a notarized authorization to pull a certified credit report, confirmation that your most recent bankruptcy proceedings have concluded, and your date of birth."**

REGGY:

**"Is that all?"**

RECEPTIONIST:

**"No, silly. I'll also need your mother's maiden name."**

REGGY:

**"Why?"**

RECEPTIONIST:

**"Beats me ... You'll have to ask somebody who actually cares ... Oh, and the date of your last rectal examination."**

REGGY:

**"I beg your pardon?"**

RECEPTIONIST:

**"Actually, I just slipped that one in there to see if you're still paying attention. Now back to the optional questions: Do you prefer a doctor who speaks English? If so, that'll cost**

**you an extra thirty bucks. Or for the reduced bargain of just twenty dollars, we'll try to schedule an interpreter who speaks with a moderate accent. Thick accent with some helpful hand gestures - fifteen bucks. Your choice."**

**REGGY:**

**"I want a doctor who speaks perfect English!"**

**RECEPTIONIST:**

**"Yea ... right. And who makes house calls, too. (She begins to laugh out loud.) Sometimes I just crack myself up!"**

**REGGY:**

**(With growing agitation.) "Listen, lady, don't you want to know the answers to any legitimate questions like the medications I'm taking, or the last time I saw a doctor?"**

**RECEPTIONIST:**

**(She searches through a stack of papers.) "That stuff isn't on my list. Now here's a print-out of each question. (She hands Reggy a thick stack of disheveled papers.) Go sit over there ... (She motions toward the other bandaged patient who is still fidgeting with a set of forms) and complete the answers in triplicate. You'll be graded on a pass-fail curve." (Reggy walks with papers in hand across stage back to Shorty's and returns to his bar stool as he addresses Shorty.)**

**REGGY:**

**"I began to understand why the receptionist was protected by two-inch thick bullet-proof glass."**

**SHORTY:**

**"Did you get the wart removed?"**

REGGY:

**“Not exactly. (He holds up the stack of papers.) I’m up to question forty-seven. She told me to make another appointment when I get done.”**

**End of Scene One**

## SECOND SCENE – THE CELL PHONE

(The scene opens at Shorty's bar. Shorty stands behind the bar polishing a glass. Reggy walks on stage and takes his usual place on his usual barstool. Silent Waldo is already present sitting on his barstool nursing a beer. Tootie sits on her bar stool as she reads the *Midnight Star* newspaper. Without any prompting, Shorty pours a beer and pushes it toward Reggy.)

SHORTY:

**"You're late!"**

REGGY:

**"It ain't my fault. I try to be a responsible beer consumer. It's the stinkin' 'weather channel.' That's all my old lady ever seems to watch. So every time the freakin' balloon goes up, I have to take her to the grocery store or she'll have another one of her toilet paper-bread-milk withdrawal convulsions. How did people ever survive before there was satellites spinning around taking snapshots of harmless clouds?"**

TOOTIE:

(Looks up and speaks with conviction.) **"We walked to school uphill in the snow, and at the end of the day we walked home backwards uphill in the snow. We wasn't 'sissyfied' like the little cell phone toting brats of today. We simply dealt with the weather if, in fact, it actually needed any dealin', if and when it finally showed up. (Tootie turns to address Waldo) Ain't that so, Waldo?"** (Waldo shrugs his shoulders indicating he doesn't much care.)

SHORTY:

**"That's right! You think the *Lone Ranger* or *Superman* had to verify the radon or asthma index before they launched into action? You think the *Caped Crusader* called ahead to see**

if he needed his goulashes? The world was truly a simpler better place prior to twenty-four-seven climatic updates. We live under enough stress as it is without additional barometric pressure. It's subtle, but quite intentional how them TV broadcasters turn unsuspecting innocent viewers like your old lady, who was at one time sorta normal, into atmospheric addicts, yearning for yet more meteorological data."

TOOTIE:

"Yup. I see it happen just about every day - the transformation from casual viewer to raving maniac. First are the so-called *observations*, followed by the inevitable *watches*. Then come the *warnings* which serve to usher in the *alerts*. By then panic has usually set in as the stage is set for the declaration of an *emergency*. Of course, with each up-tick racing toward the end of the world, the rat-bastards sitting high and dry in the weather channel storm center studio take on new more concerned expressions that silently confirm the approach of impending disaster. At first, there's just a hint of a furrowed brow. Then comes the pulsing vein in the forehead, followed by the clammy cheeks, accentuated by ever higher changes in voice as if the announcer just dipped his private parts into an unheated municipal swimming pool."

SHORTY:

"What gets me is how these approaching catastrophes can take on biblical proportions, similar to the pharaoh of Egypt's confrontation with frogs and locust. There are tomato frost warnings, and ultraviolet alerts, and arthritis index updates, but mysteriously never anything to make the viewer feel warm and fuzzy if just for a few fleeting moments."

REGGY:

**“You got it. So my old lady barges into the living room and announces that the world is coming to an end for the forth time this month, and that we’ve got to make another pilgrimage to the grocery store before the chickens run out. Everyone knows that’s impossible. Them birds’ little legs is tied with string, so they can’t hardly escape as it is.”**

SHORTY:

**“Why folks still listen to them weather people is beyond me. They got satellites and radars and planes and yet they’re wrong more often than not. If a fortune teller or stockbroker worked with the same percentage of inaccuracy, they’d be out of business before next Tuesday.”**

TOOTIE:

**“I think them weather people got some arrangement goin’ with the bread and milk industry. Some meteorologist announces a so-called *alert*, and all of a sudden each grocery store looks like a scene from the *Night of the Living Dead*. Eighty-year old zombies fight each other in the isles in desperate slow motion grasping with their boney age-spotted outstretched fingers for the last loaves of ten-day old bread conveniently situated next to the rapidly vanishing supply of Exlax.”**

SHORTY:

**“How did mankind exist for all those millions of years without satellites and the cell phones that swiftly followed? For most people, the iphone has become an appendage of their body.”**

REGGY:

**"I'm not so sure it's all for the better. I'm not so sure the cell phone has been an improvement in the human condition. It all brings to mind poor old Joe Nonnemaker. Remember him?"**

SHORTY:

**"Didn't he work in the rolling mill at the steel?"**

REGGY:

**"That's the guy. Well, he died last week, so I attended his funeral mass over at St. Stephen's Church on Broad Street. They rolled his casket up front next to his widow and the priest. The place was packed with mourners."** (Reggy dismounts from his barstool and walks across stage into the church. He finds a seat in a pew next to a well-dressed man who is wiping his eyes with a handkerchief. A Catholic priest stands addressing the mourners as the widow sits next to a closed coffin. Two mourners sit in a pew with Reggy and the well-dressed man.)

PRIEST:

**"Dearly beloved, we gather together to celebrate the life and untimely death of our cherished friend, Joseph Nonnemaker, who was suddenly and tragically taken from us during an unfortunate auto accident as he was texting his last message here on earth. (The well-dressed man blows his nose and wipes his eyes.) Let us bow our heads in silent prayer as we each recall Joseph in our own special way."** (As the mourners bow their heads in silent prayer, a cell phone located in the well-dressed man's coat pocket announces an incoming call with a loud introductory musical tune *Call Me, Baby You Know You Can Call Me, Call Me So I'm Not Alone*. The well-dressed man fumbles for his phone as he wipes his eyes.)

WELL-DRESSED MAN:

(Using a stage whisper.) **"Hello ... No, I popped in at the Nonnemaker funeral ... St. Stephen's on Broad Street ... It's a really big church ... We're praying ... 'Cause it's a funeral ... Listen, can I call you back? This isn't the best time to ... Half a gallon or just a quart?... Fat-free or one percent?... Okay, I'll pick up a bunch if they're not real green ... Have you been watching the Weather Channel? Do you know if we need more toilet paper? ... Love you, too."** (The well-dressed man places the cell phone back in his pocket and bows his head in prayer.)

PRIEST:

(He lifts his hands upward toward Heaven.) **"Our Father and gracious Lord ..."** (From within the closed casket emanates the popular tune *We're In The Money... We're In The Money.*)

FIRST MOURNER:

**"That sounds like Joe's cell phone. He kept it so loud it could wake up the dead!"**

SECOND MOURNER:

**"I suppose we're about to find out."** (The cell phone inside the coffin activates it's sing-song jingle again *We're In The Money... We're In The Money.*)

WIDOW:

(She addresses the Priest.) **"Pardon me, Father, but I think somebody is calling for Joe. I know you're praying and everything, but would you be a dear and see who it is?"** (The Priest slowly lowers his hands and complies with the widow's request. He raises the coffin lid and begins to rummage about, lifting a lifeless arm into view, then part of a necktie without success. The widow points in a helpful manner.) **He usually carries his phone in his right**



**pocket. I've never known him to go anywhere without it." (The Priest finally locates the cell phone and takes the call.)**

**PRIEST:**

**"Hello ... He's not available ... Because he's gone to a better place ... No, I doubt he'll be returning ... Certainly, if that changes, I'll see that he gets the message." (The Priest places the cell phone back in the decedent's right pocket and closes the casket lid.)**

**WIDOW:**

**"Well, who was it?"**

**PRIEST:**

**"I'm not sure. They said they'd call back."**

**End of Scene Two**

### **THIRD SCENE – A DAY AT THE RACES**

(Reggy enters the bar as Shorty stands polishing a glass. Waldo and Tootie are seated upon their usual barstools. Reggy mounts his usual barstool as Shorty pours him a beer.)

SHORTY:

(He addresses all three patrons.) **"I've got a couple extra lottery tickets, if you're interested. There could be a million dollar winner just waiting to be claimed."**

TOOTIE:

**"Don't you find it slightly ironic that just a few years back people were hauled off to jail for gambling, and now politicians nationwide can't balance their budgets without it."**

SHORTY:

**"It's become a recognized fabric of our society - an accepted pastime."**

TOOTIE:

**"It's a fool's paradise. Only an idiot who never heard of probability and statistics would waste his hard-earned after tax dollars on a rigged game. How can you be that stupid, gambling all these years!"**

SHORTY:

**"No one 'gambles' anymore, Tootie. The sophisticated student of the wagering sciences merely indulges in 'gaming'."**

TOOTIE:

**"There's a difference?"**

SHORTY:

**"I'm not sure, but the folks who run Las Vegas think it sounds better if some grandmother sitting all day in front of a one armed bandit merely spends her golden years *gaming*."**

**Gambling** sounds kinda sleazy. At any rate, the well-informed gaming consumer can make a couple of bucks if he simply applies himself. (Shorty turns to address Reggy.) **How many times have I invited you to join me at the track?"**

REGGY:

**"Countless. But why would I want to watch some horses running around in a circle? It's as boring as Nascar, but with less horsepower."**

SHORTY:

**"What if I told you there's money to be made - guaranteed. You just need a knowledgeable tutor. Someone like me."**

REGGY:

**"Guaranteed!"**

SHORTY:

**"Guaranteed! Wagering on the nags requires diligent perceptive deduction, interspersed with a little perseverance. But the rewards are there if you apply yourself."**

REGGY:

**"Guaranteed?"**

SHORTY:

**"Guaranteed! Tootie and Waldo – you're in charge until we get back."** (Reggy dismounts from his barstool as Shorty takes off his apron. Together they walk across the stage to an off-track betting parlor where they encounter a vendor selling brochures.)

VENDOR:

**“Get your copy of the *Daily Wager*, gents. Just five bucks gives you up-to-the-minute information on all the winners - guaranteed.”** (Shorty hands the vendor five dollars, and receives a copy of the newspaper.)

REGGY:

**“What’s that?”**

SHORTY:

(He smacks the newspaper with the back of his hand.) **“This here gives the inside poop on every horse in every race, from New York to California. Most important, it gives the odds on which steed is gonna come home first.”**

REGGY:

**“It tells you which one is gonna win?”**

SHORTY:

**“Well ... it gives you an advantage. You still have to mix in your own private gaming formula to be assured of picking the winner each time.”**

REGGY:

**“Formula?”**

SHORTY:

**“Mine is foolproof. Can’t fail. I might be willing to disclose it, but** (Shorty cautiously looks about as he speaks in a stage whisper) **if you *ever* breathe a word to anyone, and my secret got out, everyone would start to win, and horseracing in the civilized world as we presently know it would come to an end.”**

REGGY:

(Reggy looks to his right, then to his left as he solemnly crosses his heart with his right hand.) **"I certainly wouldn't want *that* to happen. I promise wild horses won't drag your secret from my tightly sealed lips."**

SHORTY:

**"Fair enough. See, some idiots think the horse's previous race results are relevant. Fools. That's like assuming just because your wife didn't say something stupid yesterday, she won't say nothin' stupid today. Other losers follow the jockey."**

REGGY:

**"The jockey?"**

SHORTY:

**"Yeah, they think if a jockey hasn't won for a while, the other jockeys will throw the race in his favor, so he can make a living, too. Some people watch the racetrack conditions, and still others look at the horse's bloodlines. All useless."**

REGGY: (Excited)

**"So ... ?"**

SHORTY:

**"There's only one sure bet. The lighter a horse is on its feet, the faster it will fly. So I watch each mount as it walks to the starting gate. Whichever nag takes the biggest last-minute nervous dump is sure to win. Works every time. Well, let's go to the betting window and I'll show you how to place a bet."**

(Reggy and Shorty walk to a table and sit down next to two disheveled gamblers, Gus and Sal, who are studying some racing forms as they also watch a TV monitor of some far-off race. Shorty continues to instruct Reggy, as Gus and Sal eavesdrop.)

SHORTY:

**“Now Reggy, since this is your first time, I’d better explain the difference between an exacta and a trifecta ...”**

GUS: (Snaps his head toward Shorty.)

**“Excuse me, pal, but did you just say that your buddy, here, Reggy, *is a first timer* – never bet on a horse before?”**

SHORTY:

**“He’s a virgin. Never been kissed.”**

SAL: (Excited)

**“What a stroke of good fortune – for all of us! Listen – this is the only time that Reggy can bless all of us with ‘beginner’s luck’. God only gives each human being one such bet, and you don’t wanna squander it. (Sal looks Reggy in the eye.) Reggy – you gotta help us! Which nag is gonna win at Aquaduct? There’s still five minutes ‘til post time.”**

REGGY: (Hesitant to respond)

**“Believe me, guys, I haven’t a clue!”**

GUS:

**“Of course you don’t! That’s the beauty part! Ain’t nothin’ to muddy the waters. Just pure beginner’s intuitive luck. (Gus shoves a paper in Reggy’s face.) Now here’s a list of the first five horses with the best odds: a three-year-old named Cocoa Muffin; a gelding with the moniker of Haley’s Rosegarden; a substitute called Conchshell Queen; a chestnut**

beauty going by Drop-In-The-Bucket; and a grey mare named Sissy-la-la. Which one is gonna hit the tape first?”

REGGY:

“Would you happen to know if any of the contestants took a large dump lately?”

SAL:

“Are you talkin’ ‘bout the jockey or the horse, and just what the hell’s that got to do with anything?”

REGGY:

“Sorry, fellas, I’m sworn to secrecy. What’s more, I can’t be responsible if you guys lose your money. Why don’t you just consult this here *Daily Wager* newspaper. (He points) I’m told it predicts all the winners.”

GUS: (Hurrying Reggy along.)

“That rag? Only an idiot would look at that! Now tell us, which is your favorite horse? Take a gander at each entrant as they parade in front of us here. Only four minutes ‘til post time, so make it snappy.”

(Reggy studies the TV monitor as he reluctantly evaluates each horse. Off-stage there are sound effects of a horse having a sustained bowel movement.)

REGGY:

“Drop-In-The-Bucket. From what I just witnessed, he’s definitely gonna be the lightest on his feet.”

GUS: (Excited.)

“Fantastic! Sal, how much money you got left?”

SAL: (He leafs through some bills.)

**"I dunno. Maybe 300 bucks."**

GUS: (Excited.)

**"Bet it all on Drop-In-The-Bucket to win. It's a sure thing. (He pats Reggy on the shoulder.)**

**I can't thank you enough, 'Reg'. We're gonna be rich! We'll be right back after we make the most important bet of our lives. You gents want us to place a bet for you?" (Sal and Gus begin to stand up from the table.)**

SHORTY:

**"That's OK. I'm gonna teach Reggy here how to place a bet so he can do it himself."**

VOICE OF OFFSTAGE ANNOUNCER:

(The audience hears the voice of an offstage announcer.) **"TWO MINUTES TO POST TIME. THE HORSES ARE APPROACHING THE STARTING GATE."**

SHORTY:

**"Reggy, it's easy. You just walk up to that man standing behind the wire cage, (he points) and tell him the racetrack, the horse, the amount of your wager, the number of the race, and the type of wager."**

REGGY:

**"Type?"**

SHORTY:

**"It's simple. You tell him either *win, place, or show*, depending on whether you think your horse will come in first, second, or third. Now hustle before it's too late."**

(Reggy cautiously approaches the betting window occupied by an expressionless man. Two other betters fall in line behind Reggy, who is hesitant, but determined.)



MAN IN THE WINDOW:

**“What’ll it be, Sport?”**

REGGY:

**“Drop-In-The-Bucket ... Two Bucks.”**

MAN IN THE WINDOW: (Sarcastically.)

**“Hey, Einstein?”**

(The Man In The Window points to a sign above the betting window that reads: *Please place all bets in the following order: the racetrack, the horse, the amount of your wager, the number of the race, and the type of wager.*)

**“There’s twenty different races scheduled on twenty different tracks in the next two hours. I need a little more information, Ace. ”**

VOICE OF THE OFFSTAGE ANNOUNCER:

**“ONE MINUTE ‘TIL POST TIME.”**

NEXT BETTER IN LINE:

**“Hey, Bub – you gonna pose for an oil portrait or place a bet? (He taps his watch.) Tic Toc!”**

REGGY:

(Nervously addresses the Man In The Window.) **“Now let’s see ... First I need a racetrack ...**

**Umm, do you know the track where Drop-In-The-Bucket will make an appearance?”**

MAN IN THE WINDOW:

(He studies a computer print-out with his unemotional eyes.) **“Aqueduct.”**

REGGY:

**“Do you know the number of that race?”**

MAN IN THE WINDOW:

**“174.”**

REGGY:

**“Okay. Two dollars he’ll win.”**

MAN IN THE WINDOW: (Sarcastically.)

**“Now let me see if I’ve got this right, Studley: Aquaduct ... Drop-In-The-Bucket ... a whopping two-dollar bet ... race number 174 ... to win. Correct?”**

REGGY: (Counts on his five fingers.)

**“Yup. That sounds right.”**

(Man In The Window pushes a computer button, and a betting slip pops out. He takes Reggy’s two dollars and hands Reggy the slip.)

MAN IN THE WINDOW: (Sarcastically)

**“You be sure to have a nice day now.”**

VOICE OF THE OFFSTAGE ANNOUNCER:

**“IT’S POST TIME. NO MORE BETS. THE HORSES ARE IN THE STARTING GATE.”**

NEXT BETTER IN LINE:

(Addresses Reggy in a menacing manner.)

**“I was gonna put five ‘hundirt’ on Conchshell Queen to place.”**

REGGY:

**“Five Hundred! Think of the money you just saved! But there’s no need to thank me.”**

(Reggy returns to the table where Gus and Sal have seated themselves next to Shorty. There is excitement in the air.)

GUS: (Breathless.)

**“We just got our bet in on time. Some nut was tying up the other line.”**

VOICE OF THE OFFSTAGE ANNOUNCER:

**“AND THEY’RE OFF!”**

SAL: (Jumps to his feet.)

**“Come on Drop-In-The-Bucket!”**

VOICE OF THE OFFSTAGE ANNOUNCER:

**“AND AT THE FIRST TURN, IT’S HALEY’S ROSEGARDEN, FOLLOWED BY  
SISSY-LA-LA WITH CONCHSHELL QUEEN CLOSING IN ON THE OUTSIDE.”**

SHORTY:

**“Ain’t this the best, Reggy? There’s no other place in the world so exciting! I’d set up  
housekeeping here if I could!”**

VOICE OF THE OFFSTAGE ANNOUNCER:

**“AND INTO THE SECOND TURN IT’S SISSY-LA-LA WITH HALEY’S  
ROSEGARDEN TRAILING HALF A LENGTH AND DROP-IN-THE-BUCKET  
MAKING HER MOVE IN TRAFFIC.”**

SAL:

**“Drop-In-The-Bucket is closing in. I’ve got a feeling she knows we put every cent we own  
on her. She’s gonna make us proud!”**

VOICE OF THE OFFSTAGE ANNOUNCER:

**“AND INTO THE THIRD TURN IT’S DROP-IN-THE-BUCKET HUGGING THE RAIL  
WITH CONCHSHELL QUEEN AT HER TAIL AND SISSY-LA-LA TWO LENGTHS  
OUT.”**

GUS:

**“We’re gonna be rich. Beginner’s luck! We’re gonna be rich!”** (Gus and Sal stand and hug each other as they jump up and down together.)

VOICE OF THE OFFSTAGE ANNOUNCER:

**“AND HEADING FOR THE CLUBHOUSE TURN IT’S DROP-IN-THE-BUCKET BY A WIDENING THREE LENGTHS FOLLOWED BY CONCHSHELL QUEEN AND ...”**

(Sal and Gus stop jumping and hugging each other as they stare out at the racetrack.)

GUS:

**“What happened ... What the hell just happened?”**

VOICE OF THE OFFSTAGE ANNOUNCER:

**“LADIES AND GENTLEMEN ... LADIES AND GENTLEMEN ... YOUR ATTENTION PLEASE. DROP-IN-THE-BUCKET AND HER JOCKEY HAVE FALLEN. IT DOES NOT APPEAR THAT THE JOCKEY IS INJURED.”**

SAL: (Distraught.)

**“Who the hell cares about the idiot jockey? My money was riding on the horse! That stupid nag only had one more stinkin’ furlong to go.”**

GUS: (Disheartened.)

**“We was this close** (he places two fingers an inch apart) **to a ten thousand dollar pay day.**  
(Gus turns to Reggy.) **You got some nerve telling us to bet on that geriatric horse. No wonder it carried twenty-to-one odds. It probably needed a new hip and a pace-maker.”**

REGGY:

**“Doesn’t anyone care about the poor horse? It hasn’t moved since it hit the ground.”**

SAL: (Unsympathetic.)

**“Happens all the time. The horse knew the dangers when it agreed to run. See that big tractor with the front-end loader? (Sal points.) Well ... Next stop for good ol’ ‘Drops’ is the dog food plant across the street.”**

GUS: (Dejected.)

**“No use staying any longer. We’re broke.”**

SAL:

**“As usual.”** (Gus throws his betting slip on the ground as Sal and Gus walk off stage.)

SHORTY:

(He picks the betting slip off the floor and examines it.) **“This’ll come in handy. It hasn’t even been walked on.”**

REGGY:

**“But it’s just a useless betting slip.”**

SHORTY:

**“Oh contraire! I send ‘em to the IRS with my tax returns as proof of my losses to offset any winnings.”**

REGGY:

**“Wait a sec! You give the federal government receipts for wagers you never made?”**

SHORTY:

**“What Uncle Sam don’t know ain’t gonna hurt him. Anyway, the feds can’t possibly expect me to gamble here all day and then pay taxes as well. Who has money like that to squander?”**

**End of Scene 3**

#### **FOURTH SCENE – THE STEEL PLANT**

(Reggy enters the bar as Shorty stands behind the bar polishing a glass. Waldo AND Tootie are perched upon their usual stools. Reggy mounts his barstool as Shorty pours him a beer.)

REGGY:

**“Went shoppin’ yesterday over at Walfarts. I needed some disposable razor blades.”**

SHORTY:

**“Find what ya wanted?”**

REGGY:

**“It’s the funniest thing, Shorty.”**

SHORTY:

**“What’s that, ‘Reg’.”**

REGGY:

**“For some reason, I dunno why, I started lookin’ at labels.”**

SHORTY:

**“Labels?”**

REGGY:

**“That mega-store covers more ground than a football field. A couple of acres under one roof. I can’t imagine how they keep the place heated and cooled.”**

SHORTY:

**“Yup. It sure is big.”**

REGGY:

**“I musta looked at several dozen labels.”**

SHORTY:

**"You don't say."**

REGGY:

**"I couldn't find a thing - not one single thing that was made in America. Everything Walfarts sells comes from China, or India, or Malaysia wherever the hell that is, or Japan, and a couple other places I never heard of and probably wouldn't wanta visit."**

TOOTIE:

**"We don't make much here no more ... except maybe beer and these here pretzels."**

**(Shorty points at a bowl on the bar.) "Far as I know, China doesn't make no pretzels, or beer nuts neither."**

REGGY:

**"I'm confused, Shorty. How did we get to be a third world country so fast? And nobody seems to realize what happened. There was all these people standing in line at Walfarts yesterday waiting to snap up so-called bargains. They was all talkin' on their iphones made in Mexico, while payin' by credit card with non-existent money."**

SHORTY:

**"Someone ought to do something, that's for sure."**

TOOTIE:

**"Them so-called bargains at Walfarts ain't exactly bargains. They represent jobs lost here, replaced by foreign sweatshops that force teenage girls to work seventy hours a week in Shanghai for fifteen cents an hour."**

SHORTY:

**“Somebody ought to do something about it, before it’s too late - that’s for sure. (Shorty turns to Waldo.) Don’t you agree, Waldo?” (Waldo shrugs his shoulders.)**

REGGY:

**“My grandfather, my father, my brother and me - we all put in forty years each at the Steel Plant. Raised families doing an honest day’s work. It actually wasn’t that long ago. Now the place is shuttered and dark. (Shorty continues to polish a glass as Reggy harks back to a time now vanished.) I can still remember getting a job there right out of high school. That’s what everybody did back then. Graduated and got a job at the Steel. You was set for life, once you got use to workin’ swing shift. I can still remember my very first day on the job. Back then, believe it or not, I had a full head of blond hair.” (Reggy dismounts from his barstool and places a blond wig over his grey hair as he transitions into a young high school graduate. He walks across stage to a steel plant equipment locker room where he encounters a grizzled old veteran locker attendant, Gushty, who stands behind a desk. Gushty is wearing a yellow safety helmet, safety glasses, and heavy gloves. He is chewing tobacco which requires that periodically he spit into a floor spittoon. Positioned above Gushty is a sign that reads:**

*SAFETY IS NO ACCIDENT*

GUSHTY:

**“Are you a new hire?”**

REGGY: (Tentatively)

**“Yes, sir. This is my first day.”**

GUSHTY:

**“No need to *sir* me, kid. I ain’t no foreman. The name’s *Gushty*.”**



REGGY:

**"I'm Reggy."**

GUSHTY:

(Gushty begins to search in a box full of helmets as he calls out names.) **"... Elmer ... Floyd ... Maurice ... Nope, didn't think so. I don't got no helmets with *Reggy* on 'em. (He starts pulling out helmets.) But there's still a pretty good selection here, including some you ain't gonna find on a baptismal certificate: *Spiderman*, *Bear*, *Zipper*, *Knuckles*, *Frostie*, *Surfer*, *Bonecrusher*, and I think *Vampire* just retired, too."**

REGGY:

**"But my name's *Reggy*."**

GUSHTY:

**"Now you ain't gonna be one of them troublemakers, are you?"**

REGGY:

**"No ... I'm just *Reggie*."**

GUSHTY:

**"Okay. Tell you what I'm gonna do. I haven't had much demand lately for *Reggy* hard hats, but for two bucks, I'll paint your name on one. But you gotta promise that when you retire, you give the helmet back – in case another *Reggy* shows up. Fair enough?"**

REGGY:

**"Deal."**

GUSHTY:

**“Now just for today, I’ll loan you the *Knuckles* safety helmet. Don’t never enter the plant without all your safety equipment in place. No exceptions. It’s in the union contract. And here’s your other safety stuff.** (Gushty grabs a big box and begins to dispense its contents, item by item, to Reggy.) **Safety hard hat.** (Reggy grabs the hard hat. Gushty looks up.) **You gotta say *check* so-s I know you received it. It’s in the union contract.”**

REGGY:

**“Oh! Okay ... Check.”**

GUSHTY:

**“That’s better. Safety hand-hook.”** (Gushty hands Reggy a bent metal rod.)

REGGY: (Confused)

**“A what?”**

GUSHTY:

**“You ain’t gonna be a troublemaker, are you? First you gotta say *check*.”**

REGGY:

**“Oh, sorry! I forgot. Check.** (Reggy inspects the hand-hook.) **What is this thing?”**

GUSHTY:

**“It’s your safety hand-hook. Never *never* touch nothin’ in the mill with your hands. They might get crushed or burned. Always use the hook! If you forget, you may end up wearing a hook permanent – like some pirate. Then I’d have to paint a new helmet. (He reaches in the box.) Safety ear protectors.”**

REGGY:

**“Check.”**

GUSHTY:

**“One pair of safety eyeglasses.”**

REGGY:

**“Check.”**

GUSHTY:

**“Two matching safety eyeglass side-shields.”**

REGGY:

**“Check.”**

GUSHTY:

**“And here’s a little advice: always insert the left safety eyeglass side-shield first, if you’ve got a chew of tobacco on your right side. Otherwise, it’s vicy-vercy.”** (Gushty spits into the spittoon.)

REGGY:

**“But I don’t chew.”**

GUSHTY:

**“Not yet, maybe, but give it time. (He reaches in the box.) One pair of metatarsal shoes.”**

REGGY:

**“Check. God, these are heavy!”**

GUSHTY:

**“Them shoes is made of steel, in case a one ton eye-beam or something drops on your tootsies. (He reaches in the box.) One pair of safety gloves.”**

REGGY:

**“Check.”**

GUSHTY:

**“One pair of wooden blocks with tie-down strings.”**

REGGY:

**“Check. What are these for?”**

GUSHTY:

**“Strap them to the bottom of your safety shoes whenever you’re standing on the safety walkway above a molten ingot. That way, your shoes won’t catch on fire – just the blocks.”**

REGGY:

**“Check.”**

GUSHTY:

(Gushty pulls out a blue plastic container with hanging elastic white straps.) **“And here’s your protector. Now all the new hires complain that it itches, but you’ll get use to it. That’s why they invented baby powder. Believe me, you’ll breathe a lot easier wearing that. It may chafe a little, but it’s worth it, especially the first time it saves your life.”**

REGGY:

(Reggy knocks on the protector with his fist as he inspects it closely.) **“Check.”**

(An off-stage echo voice explains to the audience what Reggy is thinking.)

ECHO VOICE:

**“I didn’t need any convincing. I had played enough football to know the value of a snug protector. I was impressed by the fact that the steel plant went out of its way to assure the safety of everything – including the family jewels.”**

GUSHTY:

**“Now go back there to the locker room, (he points) put on all your safety equipment, and get down to the mill floor, pronto. Your shift starts in ten minutes. You don’t wanna be late your first day.”**

(Spotlight on steel mill foundry. Reggy tentatively enters, encumbered by all his ill-fitting safety equipment. He is wearing the *Knuckles* hard hat, gloves, metatarsal shoes, eyeglasses with side shields, and ear protectors. He carries the hand-hook. A foreman wearing a hard hat bearing the name *Executioner* approaches Reggy.)

EXECUTIONER:

**“Hey, Ken-Nuck-Less – you the new hire?”**

REGGY: (Appears confused)

**“Who me? My name is Reggy.”**

EXECUTIONER:

**“Hats don’t lie, Ken-Nuck-Less. It’s in the union contract. Now follow me. I’m your foreman.** (They walk over to four metal stairs that lead to a large plastic sign hanging on the wall. The sign, composed of large red plastic lettering reads: *361 Days Without An Injury – Safety Is No Accident.*) **See that sign?”** (Executioner points.)

REGGY:

**“Yes sir.”**

EXECUTIONER:

**“We ain’t had no injuries in this here department for 361 (pronounced ‘tree-hundirt’) days. If we don’t have none for just four more lousy days – one full year – do you know what happens?”**

REGGY:

**"No sir."**

EXECUTIONER:

**"Every man in here, all 670 of us, gets a day off with pay. In my 28 years in this stinkin' foundry, it ain't never happened. Know why, Ken-Nuck-Less?"**

REGGY:

**"I'm not quite sure, sir."**

EXECUTIONER:

**"Because some shit-head always falls into a molten pit at the last minute, and melts himself into an ingot, or gets run over by a train, or has a beam fall on 'em. That's the type of selfish conduct that ruins things for the rest of us. But it ain't gonna happen *this* year. Do I make myself clear?"**

REGGY:

**"I think so."**

EXECUTIONER:

**"Well let me be more specific. If you injure yourself on my watch during the next four days, and you happen to survive, a steel beam will mysteriously drop on you. Understand?"**

REGGY: (Swallows)

**"Yes, sir."**

EXECUTIONER:

**"Good. Now that we've had our little chat, we can get to work. And by the way, why aren't you wearin' your safety respirator? It should be hanging around your neck for easy access."**

REGGY:

**“My what?”**

EXECUTIONER:

**“Your air filter – so you only inhale a few of the toxic fumes. It’s made of blue plastic and has two elastic white straps. Didn’t the locker attendant give you one?”**

REGGY:

**“Respirator? I thought that was supposed to protect ... I mean the cup seems to fit snugly around my ... See I played football and ...”**

EXECUTIONER:

**“Well don’t just stand there, Ken-Nuck-Less. Find it and put it around your neck. It’s in the union contract.”**

(Reggy momentarily runs behind a stage curtain, and quickly reappears carrying a large bucket.

The respirator is now hanging around his neck. An offstage echo voice offers another explanation to the audience as Reggy acts out what is said.)

ECHO VOICE:

**“I ran back to the locker room, strategically relocated the baby-blue plastic jockstrap so that it now hung around my neck in case I needed a respirator, and returned to the mill foundry. The next day, I was put to work picking up scrap metal that lay scattered about the floor. As I was grazing among the bits and pieces of metal, my knowledgeable foreman, Mr. Executioner, approached me. He was carrying a large red plastic number “2” in his hand.”**

(Spotlight focuses upon the four stairs leading to the safety sign. Executioner approaches Reggy.)

EXECUTIONER:

**“Hey, Ken-Nuck-Less.”**

REGGY:

**“Actually, my name is ... Yes sir?”**

EXECUTIONER:

**“Do me a favor, will ya? Take this here number 2, go up them stairs, take down the number 1, and hang the 2 in its place – 362 days without an accident. We should all be very proud.”**

REGGY:

**“Yes sir.”** (Reggy takes the number 2 and climbs the four stairs. As he does so, the offstage echo voice explains what is occurring. Reggy acts out the explanation as he removes the red plastic number 1, and hangs the number 2 in its place. He turns to descend the steps as the stage lights are extinguished and the audience hears a loud crashing sound.)

ECHO VOICE:

**“That’s the last thing I remember – until I regained consciousness some time later. I vaguely recall hanging up the big number 2. I think I tripped going down the safety stairs. It was the protective steel toe of my metatarsal safety boot that first became wedged in the no-slip corrugated surface of the steel safety stairs. I began to careen downward, so I instinctively grabbed for the bright yellow safety handrail, but my safety hand-hook got in the way. Unfortunately, my heavy-duty safety gloves, one still clutching the big red plastic number 1, were too large to grip anything. My OSHA-designed hard hat started to fall over my eyes, causing my regulation safety goggles to smash onto the bridge of my nose, which dislodged my safety respirator, which would have been better suited at that**



particular moment, had it returned to a jockstrap status. My safety side-shields followed suit as they both dug simultaneously into my eye sockets. This caused my safety ear protectors to unsnap and slide sideways across my face. I tried to yell for help, but one of the protectors lodged in my throat and I may have swallowed it. I tumbled head over heels as I bounced down each step, falling in a heap at the Executioner's feet."

(Spotlight illuminates young Reggy, lying supine on the ground. Executioner and Gushty are hovering above him.)

GUSHTY:

"Do you think he's dead?"

EXECUTIONER:

"Don't know. Don't care. We may have to drag his sorry ass out past the parking lot, and throw what's left of him into the river. He don't have much fat on 'em. The metatarsal shoes will weigh his body down. It'll be like he never existed."

(Reggy begins to regain consciousness.)

REGGY:

"Where am I?"

EXECUTIONER: (Sarcastically)

"Kansas, and I'm Auntie-Em."

REGGY:

(Reggy sits up, still clutching the red number 1.)

"I remember now. I musta tripped. All that safety equipment almost killed me. By the way, here's your number back." (Reggy hands the plastic number to the Executioner.)

GUSHTY:

**"We was very concerned about you. Are you ... *injured*?"**

REGGY:

**"I don't think so."**

EXECUTIONER:

**"Lucky for you, Ken-Nuck-Less. Very lucky for you."** (The Executioner and Gushty help Reggy regain his feet as they walk off stage together.)

**End of Scene 4**

## **FIFTH SCENE – THE CHEAPSKATE**

(Reggy enters the bar and sits upon his usual bar stool. Waldo and Tootie are already present sitting upon their stools as they nurse glasses of beer. Shorty stands behind the bar, polishing a glass.)

REGGY:

**“That was some sendoff they gave Joe Nonnemaker at his funeral. There was a big reception after the formal service down in the basement of the church. Lots of food, including ice cream for dessert.”**

SHORTY:

**“Waste of money if you ask me. After all, the guy’s dead. They shoulda thrown him a party when he might-a actually enjoyed it. Uncle Sam has the right idea. The government pays about \$250 when you die to be applied toward your final expenses. A no-frills funeral really shouldn’t cost much more.”**

TOOTIE:

**“You can’t be serious, Shorty. A funeral can run you several thousand dollars.”**

SHORTY:

**“Not if you’re a careful consumer. Some options may not be necessary. I learned that from personal experience, when my beloved wife, Silvia, passed away.”**

REGGY:

**“How long’s it been since she passed, Shorty?”**

SHORTY:

**“Goin’ on fifteen years. Still miss her somethin’ terrible. I was in a daze when she died, so naturally I answered ‘yes’ without thinkin’ to every suggestion the undertaker made. No disrespect, but before I knew it, the casket and the trip to the cemetery alone had set me back the cost of a new car!”**

TOOTIE:

**“Fifteen years. Imagine.”**

SHORTY:

**“I’m talkin’ a Mercedes, not some Buick. Well, I learned an important lesson. You wanna hear this story?”**

REGGY:

**“You bet.”**

SHORTY:

**See, when I married my sweet Silvia, I got a little somethin’ extra with the deal – her mother, Beula.”**

REGGY:

**“Beula! Was that the only name they could come up with?”**

SHORTY:

**“This mother-in-law came straight from the old country – Germany, and from day one, Beula and me – we didn’t exactly see eye-to-eye. With time, our little personality conflict only grew deeper. She was an old relic from another world who knew her status in the house was secure only as long as her daughter was in the**

picture. But then dear Silvia passed on to Heaven, leaving Beula behind to fend for herself.”

TOOTIE:

“Did you finally make peace with her?”

SHORTY:

“Not exactly. One day the old battle ax had a fit or somethin’ and landed on the kitchen floor, spread eagle-like. She was still sorta breathin’, so for reasons still unclear I knelt down and gave her mouth-to-mouth. Glory be, she comes to. Then she takes one look at me with them squinty reptile eyes, realizes what just happened, and says in her German accent so thick you could cut it with a knife ‘Besser dat I vood have died on de kitchen floor den dat devil lips like your-n hat saved me’.”

TOOTIE:

“That’s the thanks you got for reviving her?”

SHORTY:

“So I figured the next time I’d take her at her word. A few months go by, and she does another swan dive on the kitchen floor. One of them spasms or something. Anyway, I honored her last wish and made sure my devil lips didn’t touch hers. I pounded on her chest a couple of times and then I called 911. They arrived, took a look, and called the coroner. He showed up and asked which funeral director I intended to use. I told him ‘the one down the block’.”

TOOTIE:

“I am so sorry for your loss.”

SHORTY:

**“That’s OK, Tootie. This story has a happy ending. So I called the funeral director and he says he can come over right away and pick up the body. But I had learned my lesson, so first I asked how much. He says the transportation charge would be three hundred and fifty dollars, and everything else would be extra. THREE HUNDRED AND FIFTY AFTER TAX DOLLARS to haul the carcass a block and a half! I wasn’t gonna pay New York City cabby rates, since all I really wanted was a no frills simple disposal.”**

TOOTIE:

**“You mean ‘funeral’.”**

SHORTY:

**“Whatever. So I put Beula in the car and drove her to another funeral parlor about a mile away, and that was a gift, ‘cause I didn’t even charge her a single dime.”**

REGGY:

**“Wait a minute! Wait a minute! You placed your dead mother-in-law in your car? That’s got to be illegal.”**

SHORTY:

**“Why? She didn’t complain, and I used a seat belt for her safety. And I saved her three hundred and fifty bucks. So I asked the second undertaker if he had a discount burial plan. He still tried to make me jump through all the usual high hurdles, but it didn’t work. Did I want her embalmed? No ... there was no need to pickle her, just incinerate her. Did she require any special clothes or make-up? No ... she wasn’t entering any beauty contest in the near future. Did she need a casket?**

No, it woulda melted sooner or later where she was headed. Did I want a special hand-carved urn in which to place the ashes? No, I figured I could locate some receptacle myself. Did I want a name plate engraved with the date of her birth and death? How much, I asked? A hundred bucks, he said. Nope, I confirmed. I'd dig one of them up, too – no pun intended."

REGGY:

"Where'd you find an urn with an engraved name plate?"

SHORTY:

"No 'problem'. While they made Beulah 'comfy' on a slab of ice, I ran down to the bowling supply place over on Fourth Street where our league gets all its trophies. I picked out a nice five dollar model and had them engrave her vital information on the plastic name plate which I removed and stuck on an overnight mailing box. The next day I sent her ashes back to Germany care of her surviving relatives, who actually wrote back that they were grateful to receive such an unexpected gift."

REGGY:

(He sighs) "You're right. The story has a happy ending."

SHORTY:

"There was one little glitch. Apparently I had failed to notice that the plastic name plate included space for both the trophy winner's most improved and highest bowling averages. They must have inserted Beulah's date of birth and death in those spots, just below the pre-printed title proclaiming her 'Champion Bowler of the Year.' Her relatives wrote back that they had no idea the dearly departed was such

**a talented athlete. I assured them by overnight wire that their beloved Beulah, even at age ninety-two, had been making strikes and spares right up to the very end.”**

**TOOTIE:**

**“Well, guys, I gotta go powder my nose.”** (Tootie leaves the stage.)

**REGGY:**

**“Why do ‘broad’s’ always refer to their nose when it ain’t that part that’s involved? Maybe I should powder my nose, too.”** (Reggy leaves the stage.)

**SHORTY:** (Turns to address Waldo)

**“Actually, your nose looks a little shiny. (Waldo shrugs his shoulders.) All right – the bar’s closed for fifteen minutes.”** (Shorty places a “closed” sign on the bar, and gazes at the audience as the lights go down, signifying the end of ACT ONE.)

**End of Scene 5.**



## **SIXTH SCENE – THE ICE HOCKEY GAME**

(Reggy takes his usual seat at the bar as Shorty studies the sports section of a newspaper. Shorty addresses Reggy as Waldo and Tootie sit upon their usual bar stools.)

SHORTY:

**“Some Pennant race, huh Reg. The Yankees are still half a game ahead of the Sox. It’s gonna be a squeaker right up to the end. A real squeaker.”**

REGGY:

**“I’m a little confused.”**

SHORTY:

**“You were expecting today to be any different?”**

REGGY:

**“Them box scores. How can one baseball team be half a game ahead of another? I thought only football was played in halves, and then there’s ice hockey, which is played in thirds.”**

SHORTY:

**“Periods, genius. Don’t you know nothin’ ‘bout keepin’ score?”**

REGGY:

**“At one time I actually thought I did, that is, until I tried golf. I figured I was way ahead. Who’d-a thought the guy with the lowest number wins?”**

TOOTIE:

**“Golf! A game designed for crazy people with lots of time on their hands. Not only must you hit the ball – then you gotta go find it, or pay someone else to tell you where it is. Them guys are nuts or somethin’.**

SHORTY:

**“As I was sayin’, in baseball, it’s easy to win half a game. See, each team plays a certain number of games during the season ...”**

REGGY:

**“I suppose so ...”**

SHORTY:

**“You just take the number in the win column, subtract the number in the loss column, and compare it to the numbers of the other teams. Sometimes it’s so close there’s only half a game difference.”**

REGGY:

**“You lost me. Those are all whole numbers – not fractions – unless maybe they decided to play half a game when nobody was lookin’.”**

SHORTY:

(He turns to Waldo for support.) **“You followin’ my clear explanation, Waldo? (Waldo shrugs his shoulders indicating he doesn’t much care. He takes another sip of beer.) The very same calculation was used by the Steel Plant when we worked the night shift.”**

REGGY:

**“It was?”**

SHORTY:

**“Yup. It’s right there in the union contract. Remember when we’d report to work as usual at eleven p.m. on the evening of Daylight Savings? They’d turn the time clock ahead an hour at two in the morning when nobody was lookin’, and then six months later they’d turn it back again.”**

TOOTIE:

**“What’s that got to do with baseball?”**

SHORTY:

**“Simple. We only worked eight hours, but the time clock said we had worked nine, and nobody ever argues with the clock, so they paid us time and a half for a full hour of overtime we hadn’t worked that really didn’t exist anyway. Well, it’s the same with baseball. They give credit for a game and a half, even though half of it might not actually exist.”**

REGGY:

**“That makes sense ... I suppose. Anyway, if it was good enough for the steel industry, it’s probably good enough for baseball. At least now I don’t feel so confused. So the Yankees are half a game ahead?”**

SHORTY:

**“Yup, half a game.”**

REGGY:

**“And now, just in time, the ice hockey season is about to start. Talk about excitement!”**

SHORTY:

**“I didn’t know you was interested in hockey. You ain’t never mentioned that before.”**

REGGY:

**“We never had a professional team located in our own back yard before. Now that they’ve built a new ice hockey arena in our neighborhood, I figure I ought to check it out and patronize a game or two. Waldo and me are goin’ for the first time tonight. We already purchased our tickets.”**

SHORTY:

(Surprised, Shorty turns to address Waldo.) **"You're gonna get off that stool long enough to watch guys missing their front teeth skate around on the ice?"** (Waldo shrugs his shoulders to indicate he doesn't much care one way or the other.)

REGGY:

**"We'll let you know how it turns out. Waldo and me are really excited."**

(The stage lights shift to a row of hockey arena seats. Reggy limps toward a seat, exhausted as he tries to catch his breath. Waldo follows as he, too, tries to recuperate after a long climb. Reggy inspects his ticket stub as he and Waldo flop down in seats located near Butch, a knowledgeable hockey fan. Butch is about 20 years old, overweight, and wears a pair of binoculars around his neck. He is grasping a one gallon drink container in one hand, and a one gallon food container in the other hand. A portable television set is positioned on his lap. He wears a cap with an ice hockey team logo in the form of a pig, and a jacket with a similar logo. He is so intense in his study of the game that he does not realize Reggy has taken a seat next to him.)

REGGY:

(Reggy talks to himself as he attempts to catch his breath.) **"I've ... never ... climbed ... so ... many ... stairs ... in ... my ... life!** (He turns to Waldo.) **Have you?"** (Waldo shrugs his shoulders as the voice of an offstage announcer is heard.)

VOICE OF OFFSTAGE ANNOUNCER:

**"FANS – JUST TWO MINUTES 'TIL FACE-OFF.** (There is a roar from the offstage crowd.) **AND REMEMBER FANS, TONIGHT IS DOLLAR NIGHT. EAT A COMBINATION OF TEN HOT DOGS OR DRINK TEN BEERS, AND IF YOU ARE**

**STILL CONSCIOUS, YOUR NEXT PURCHASE IS ONLY A DOLLAR. JUST  
ANOTHER WAY THE FERROUS PIGLETS WANT TO SHOW THEIR  
APPRECIATION FOR YOUR LOYAL PATRONAGE!”**

(Reggy’s heavy breathing subsides as Butch takes notice of him.)

**BUTCH:**

**“Hi there. I’m Butch. I’d shake your hand if-n I wasn’t clutching this here beer and my  
box of ju-ju-bees. I don’t recall seeing you guys up here at arena level ZZ before, and I  
oughta know, ‘cause I’ve got a season ticket, and I never miss a home game.”**

**REGGY:**

**“I’m Reggy and this is Waldo. I doubt we’ve ever met, ‘cause this is our first time here.”**

**BUTCH:**

(Amazed) **“First time?”**

**REGGY:**

**“First time ever at a hockey game. First time in this arena.”**

**BUTCH:**

**“You’re shittin’ me!”**

**REGGY:**

**“Don’t tell me – the team that takes the biggest dump wins?”**

**BUTCH:**

**“Well, you’re in for a real treat, guys. The Piglets are on a winning streak. Two in a row.  
By the way, how comes you’re sweatin’?”**

REGGY:

**“They didn’t provide us with any oxygen masks. We just walked up eighteen flights of stairs.”** (He points toward the exit.) **“We couldn’t find an elevator.”**

VOICE OF OFFSTAGE ANNOUNCER:

**“AND THE PIGLETS ARE TAKING THE ICE!”** (The offstage crowd roars. Butch screams in excitement as well.)

BUTCH:

**“Let’s go Piglets!** (He regains his composure.) **Now where was I? Oh yeah ... There ain’t no elevators, ‘cause they couldn’t fit elevator shafts between the ceiling support beams.”** (He points upward.) **“But that’s a small price to pay, since these are the best seats in the house. Make no mistake about that!”**

REGGY:

(Incredulous) **“The best?”**

BUTCH:

**“You bet. We may not be exactly at ground level ...”**

REGGY:

(Interrupts sarcastically) **“We’re in the stratosphere! Are those cumulus clouds floating down there between us and the ice?”** (Reggy points downward over the rail as Waldo tentatively peeks toward the ice.)

BUTCH:

**“You’re missing the point. Up here we get to enjoy the game three separate times for the price of one.”**

REGGY:

**"I don't follow."**

BUTCH:

**"First, I watch the action on TV. (Butch points at his television set.) Next there's the two second time delay ..."**

REGGY:

**"The what?"**

BUTCH:

**"Yeah. It takes about two seconds for the sound of the crowd's reaction to travel up here. So after the Piglets score a goal, or bash in an opponent's skull, I get to hear the actual cheer from down below. By then the instant replay comes on the tube, so I can see the action all over again. You ain't gonna enjoy all that drama sittin' rink-side."**

REGGY:

**"It looks like there are little ants scurrying over a sugar cube."**

BUTCH:

**"Probably the players on the ice. The game must have started. Sometimes it's hard to tell. (Butch stares at his TV screen.) Oh! Some lady in the tenth row just swallowed the puck. OK ... so wait for it ... wait for it ... (There is a roar from the offstage crowd.) What'd I tell ya – it takes a moment to hear the reaction. Look! (Butch points at his television.) The instant replay! There's teeth shooting out of her mouth like *Chiclets*. Just another reason to enjoy these seats. Ain't gonna get hit by a puck up here."**

VOICE OF THE OFFSTAGE ANNOUNCER:

**“KILLER KARSON – TWO MINUTES – HIGH STICKING!”**

BUTCH:

**“OK! This is our chance to score. The Dodo Birds are down a man. Hey, by the way, you guys want something to eat or drink? I’ve got Ju-ju-bees in this here container, and a gallon of suds in this other tankard. (Butch raises each canister up for display.) I always stock up at base camp down at sea level, cuz ya know them vendors ain’t hikin’ up here!”**

REGGY:

**“Thank you for the kind offer, but I usually just have a small glass of beer before bedtime.”**

BUTCH:

**“But that’ll put you at a real disadvantage.”**

REGGY:

**“It will?”**

BUTCH:

**“Everyone else is trying to get bloated. How you gonna piss on a penguin if your bladder isn’t full?”**

REGGY:

**“I beg your pardon?”**

BUTCH:

**“The penguins. Don’t you intend to play? You earn points if your aim is above average. I sure aim to play at intermission.”**

REGGY:

**“Play what?”**



BUTCH:

**"I keep forgetting you ain't never been here before. Guess I better explain. See, the Piglets have thought of everything. They've installed video games in the urinals, so you won't be bored, not even for a minute. It's brought beer sales and urination to a new level. Now when you take a leak, you can piss on animated penguins as they slide down the urinals. Atlantic City don't even have nothin' like that. Whoever drenches the most penguins with a direct hit before the birds disappear down the drain, wins. They put your name and point total in lights on the arena scoreboard. The grand prize is a trip to Antarctica."**

REGGY:

**"Spectators piss on penguins?"**

BUTCH:

**"By the thousands. Several leagues have already formed. And don't worry - they ain't real birds, just Disney-like animations, but it's a pretty sophisticated game, with rules and everything. To begin with, you have to pre-register your handicap, similar to golf."**

REGGY:

**"Handicap?"**

BUTCH:

**"They want to keep the playing field level. Obviously if you got a one inch pecker and you're competing against someone with a ten incher, the natural reach advantage isn't exactly fair."**

REGGY:

**"I suppose so ..."**

BUTCH:

**“ ... So after you enter your name and seat number on the urinal computer pad, you also include your length. If you’re unsure, they supply a tape measure for your convenience.”**

REGGY:

**“Isn’t it likely some of the participants might try to exaggerate that figure just a little?”**

BUTCH:

**“That’s not possible. Ever notice the momentary red beam of light that flashes for maybe a tenth of a second whenever you’re done taking a wiz?”**

REGGY:

**“Sure, it signals the urinal to automatically flush.”**

BUTCH:

**“I suppose that’s one way to look at it. Actually, it does more than that. It takes a picture of your private parts and sends it to Washington where it’s stored by the government in one of them big underground memory banks for national security purposes. Then when you pass through a full-body scanner at the airport, they can compare data to confirm it’s really you, and not some terrorist. Better than a fingerprint, since no two dicks look exactly alike.”**

REGGY:

**“I can’t say that I’ve ever noticed. (Reggy turns to Waldo.) How ‘bout you?” (Waldo thinks for a moment as he begins to shake his head slightly up and down.)**

BUTCH:

**“Now they’re thinkin’ about installing the penguin game in the ladies’ toilets, but the skill level required just ain’t gonna be the same, no matter how you slice it.”**

VOICE OF THE OFFSTAGE ANNOUNCER:

**“SCORE! THE PIGLETS TAKE FIRST BLOOD WITH JUST TWENTY SECONDS REMAINING IN THE PENALTY!”**

(Butch jumps out of his seat with joy, and as he does so, he loses control of his container of Ju-ju-bees, and his gallon container of beer, both of which are unintentionally projected over the guardrail and hurtle toward the unsuspecting spectators far below.)

REGGY:

**“Oh my God! Your Ju-ju-bees! Your beer!”**

BUTCH:

**“At least this time I didn’t lose my binoculars. I must go through a pair a month.”**

REGGY:

(Reggy and Waldo look downward over the guardrail with concern.) **“I sure hope no one below gets injured. Each of your containers probably holds a couple of pounds!”**

BUTCH:

(Unconcerned.) **“Don’t you worry none about them people. Serves ‘em right for buyin’ those cushy so-called *expensive* seats. No one ever dumps Ju-ju-bees or beer on us up here. Like I said, the best seats in the house. The important thing is the Piglets scored ... they scored! Now we can join in the *oink-oink* song!”**

REGGY:

**“We can?”**

BUTCH:

(Butch begins to sing and dance in jubilation with an offstage chorus.) **“Oink oink oink oink ... oink oink oink oink ... oink-oink ... oink-oink ... oink oink oink oink ...”** (He turns to

Reggy and Waldo.) **"Come-on, guys, join in the celebration."** (Reggy tentatively begins to sing with Butch as Waldo remains silent.)

REGGY and BUTCH:

(In two-part harmony) **"Oink oink oink oink ... oink oink oink oink ... oink-oink ... oink-oink ... oink oink oink oink."**

BUTCH:

**"Not bad – not bad at all. Well, that's the end of the first period. Now it's time to piss on some penguins. You want to try your luck? It's open season. If you have some natural talent, you can try out for the Wednesday night league."**

**End of Scene 6**

## **SEVENTH SCENE – THE TRANSCRIBULATOR**

(Reggy enters the bar as Shorty stands alone polishing a glass. Waldo and Tootie are perched on their bar stools. Reggy mounts his usual barstool as Shorty pours him a beer.)

REGGY:

**“Says in the newspaper they’re gonna close the throughway again to widen the interchange near the mall. Maybe they shoulda thought about that before they built the stupid mall.”**

SHORTY:

**“Maybe they shoulda thought about that before they built the stupid interstate. That highway was obsolete the day they designed it. Not enough lanes for all the traffic. Who were they kiddin’?”**

TOOTIE:

**“I guess just about everything becomes antiquated and useless with time, sorta like us. I’m startin’ to disintegrate piece by piece. Never was properly introduced to the pig that gave me my new heart valve, yet I often think about that porker. Especially at breakfast when scrapple comes with. Half my teeth have been replaced, and several other things ain’t workin’ as well as they used to. I suppose it’s God’s way of sayin’ you may have overstayed your welcome.”**

SHORTY:

**“I suppose you’ve got to step aside at some point, and let the new arrivals have a chance. Of course intentional planned obsolescence oughta be against the law. (Shorty turns to Waldo.) Don’t you agree, Waldo? (Waldo shrugs his shoulders.) See this here cash register?” (He points at a cash register behind the bar.)**

REGGY:

“Yup.”

SHORTY:

“Zeenox Computers talked me into buyin’ it just four years ago. It does everything. The minute I put money in the till, the computer instantly calculates my inventory of remaining beer, and if necessary, automatically orders more brew. It sends a monthly compilation of sales to my CPA so he can prepare my quarterly tax returns. And it tells me whether I’ve made a profit or not.”

TOOTIE:

“That’s pretty sophisticated.”

SHORTY:

“That’s what I thought – until last week.”

TOOTIE:

“Did somethin’ happen?”

SHORTY:

“The Zeenox lady showed up here unannounced, and she didn’t stop by for a beer. She sat right on that empty stool, pretty as you please.”

REGGY:

“If you say so. Beauty is in the eye of the beer-holder.”

(Shorty walks to the end of the bar as Cindy Ragsdale, the Zeenox sales lady enters the stage and takes a seat on an unoccupied bar stool. She is smartly dressed, self-assured, all-knowing, and enthusiastic.) “Good afternoon, Ma’am. Can I get you somethin’?”

RAGSDALE:

(Ragsdale sticks out her hand as they shake hands.) **"I'm Cindy Ragsdale, your Zeenox Personal Sales Representative. I've been dying to meet you!"**

SHORTY:

**"I didn't know I had one of them."**

RAGSDALE:

**"At your service. And I'm here with really good news!"**

SHORTY:

(Wearily) **"I could sure use some of that."**

RAGSDALE:

**"Today's your anniversary!"**

SHORTY:

**"My what? It is?"**

RAGSDALE:

**"It was exactly four years ago to the day that you purchased your Zeenox Model B43-101-A8."**

SHORTY:

**"Really?"**

RAGSDALE:

**"You've paid all forty-eight monthly installments. Now, for the additional sum of just one more dollar you can own your cash register outright."**

SHORTY:

(He becomes jubilant.) **“Free – free at last! (He begins to search his pockets.) I must have a lousy dollar somewhere. Truth is, the monthly payment was higher than the installment loan on my first house mortgage. Now I’ll be able to travel, or take in a show. For that matter, I can finally schedule my mother’s delayed bunion operation. Or maybe I’ll just relax and cut back to a sixty hour work week.”**

RAGSDALE:

**“Mr. Zappelberger ...”**

SHORTY:

**“...Call me ‘Shorty’ ...”**

RAGSDALE:

**“I have wonderful news.”**

SHORTY:

**“More?”**

RAGSDALE:

**“You see, it’s possible for you to save a sub – sub – a lotta money.”**

SHORTY:

**“I know! Without those stinkin’ monthly installments, I can trade in my used car and ...”**

RAGSDALE:

(Interrupts) **“Mr. Zappelberger ...”**

SHORTY:

**“...Yes ...?”**



RAGSDALE:

**"Now is the perfect time for you to purchase our new Zeenox Model P37-Q, the ultimate in barroom cash register technology. Its computer can send intercontinental digital color pictures to any other similar receptor without the need for ..."**

SHORTY:

**(Interrupts) "... Ms. Ragsdale ..."**

RAGSDALE:

**"...Call me *Dolly* ... All my friends just call me *Dolly* ..."**

SHORTY:

**"Ms. Ragsdale ..."**

RAGSDALE:

**"Yes?"**

SHORTY:

**"My B43-101-A works like a charm. The beer shows up on time, as does my CPA and the tax returns. And now I'll finally own the damn cash register outright. I'll actually be out of debt. Frankly, I don't have a need to digitally transmit anything anywhere. What could possibly induce me to obligate myself with another oppressive life-altering debt?"**

RAGSDALE:

**"I'm mighty glad you asked that question. See, your monthly payments included a maintenance service contract. We provided 24-hour repair. But now your cash register has reached its fourth birthday."**

SHORTY:

**"So just send me another service contract."**

RAGSDALE:

**“Not so fast. See, that’s where the savings come in. The monthly service contract on your outdated machine would cost more than the monthly installment on our new P37-Q. You’ll save five dollars per month over the next 48 months.”**

SHORTY:

**“But the guy who sold me my cash register said it would last a lifetime! I probably should talk to him.”**

RAGSDALE:

**“Who? Bob? He’s not here anymore. He passed away. He might have been referring to *his* lifetime. Now as you know, repair costs are prohibitive. It’s hard to find parts for obsolete machines. On the other hand, if you trade in your present antiquated ...”**

SHORTY:

**(Interrupts) “Trade it in? Antiquated? One more lousy buck and the damned thing is paid off!”**

RAGSDALE:

**“That’s true, but it’s about to become obsolete. We don’t make that line of transcribulator components any more. Not since everything was outsourced to Bombay just before the last big typhoon.”**

SHORTY:

**“Bombey?”**

RAGSDALE:

**“Our new model is catching on fast. Walfarts has ordered thousands of them to keep up with sales. We can give you a credit of two monthly payments. You don’t want to pass up these savings. I doubt we’ll be making this offer again.”**

(Spotlight extinguished on Ragsdale. Shorty returns to the bar.)

SHORTY:

(Vanquished) **“Zeenox is shipping me a new cash register transcribulator next week straight from the factory in Ecuador. They say it does everything, except wash shot glasses.”**

REGGY:

**“That’s good. Otherwise, you might be out of a job, and you certainly don’t wanna become obsolete.”**

**End of Scene 7**

## **EIGHTH SCENE – I'M CONFUSED**

(There comes a time during every bar room conversation when the topics under discussion, fueled by a beer or two, border upon the absurd. It's about to happen again as Reggy enters Shorty's Bar and sits upon his usual barstool. Without any prompting, Shorty pours Reggy a beer. Waldo and Tootie are seated upon their usual bar stools nursing their beers.)

REGGY:

**"I dropped my neighbor off at the airport. She's on her way to Indiana to help with the newest grandchild."**

SHORTY:

**"That's nice. I hope she has a good flight."**

REGGY:

**"The strangest thing happened. As I'm drivin' up to the terminal building, I come upon this big neon sign with bright flashing red letters each the size of a refrigerator."** (Reggy spreads his hands upward as if he's pointing to each word as it floats above him. He speaks the six words aloud:)

***"ARRIVING PASSENGERS – LEFT    DEPARTING PASSENGERS – RIGHT"***

SHORTY:

**"What's so strange about that?"**

REGGY:

**"Them words is confusing."**

TOOTIE:

**"No they're not. Just go to the left or the right. What could be simpler?"**

REGGY:

**“Does that sign apply to a person sitting in the car, or to a person sitting in an airplane?”**

TOOTIE:

**“I don’t follow you.”**

REGGY:

**“Does the sign refer to arriving passengers in a car who will be departing in an airplane, or does it refer to arriving passengers in an airplane who will be departing in a car? Or does it apply to those who are departing from an airplane as they arrive here?”**

SHORTY:

**“What are you, mental? Come to think of it, it don’t actually matter whether you turn to the left or to the right, ‘cause everybody ultimately ends up in the same place. There is only one stinkin’ parkin’ lot at that airport!”**

REGGY:

**“But the sign is confusing. (Reggy turns to Waldo.) Don’t you find that sign confusing?”**

**(Waldo shrugs his shoulders.)**

TOOTIE:

**“You just gotta use some common sense when you read a sign.”**

REGGY:

**“I wish it were that easy.”**

TOOTIE:

**“It’s simple. Take the sign *Slow children playing?* The first time I read that, I thought it was referring to some stupid kids. But that would have been politically incorrect. *Drive-in window.* I certainly wouldn’t take that literally. *Bridge freezes before road surface.* You can**

ignore that one since they don't tell you how far before. *Ped X-ing*. Now that's a tough one 'cause it's written in some foreign language."

REGGY:

"How 'bout them signs that proclaim: *End Road Work*. If they feel that strongly about it, why did they start in the first place?"

SHORTY:

"Now you're catching on. You can't take signs too seriously."

REGGY:

"I've lived here all my life, and each day I get a little more confused. I feel like I've become an alien in an alien world. My Pontiac may be the only car on the road without a global positioning system. I've been using 'Tripple A' roadmaps for fifty years. Yesterday I bought gasoline with cash, and the clerk looked at me like I was from Mars."

SHORTY:

"Well, Reggy my friend, if ya really wanna know, it's probably time for you to enter the twenty-first century and get an EZ Pass."

REGGY:

"See, that's just what I'm talkin' about. When did everybody decide they needed to be in such an all-fired rush? Nobody but me drives at the posted speed limit. Everybody sits on my bumper, or beeps their horn and passes me like they was the Road Runner."

SHORTY:

"Reg – if you ain't doin' 75 on the highway, you're probably holdin' up traffic."

REGGY:

**"I know ... I know. Sometimes I think about getting in the jet stream behind one of them big trucks doin' 80, turning off my engine, putting my car in neutral, and letting the back draft just suck me down the road. It would save on gas."**

SHORTY:

**"You ready for another beer?" (Shorty pours Reggy another beer.)**

REGGY:

**"And another thing I just don't understand. All them athletes on TV got tattoos. Shouldn't there be an easier way to tell 'em apart."**

TOOTIE:

**"What do you care if they decide to disfigure themselves?"**

REGGY:

**"It don't make any sense. Getting a tattoo is like slapping a bumper sticker on a Mercedes. It don't improve the design, and it ain't gonna increase the value of the body it's stuck on. I'm confused. Why would anyone intentionally disfigure themselves?"**

TOOTIE:

**"It's all the rage. Everybody's doin' it. Imagine a nice butterfly or perhaps some red roses imprinted on your arm. It would make a nice statement that you have finally arrived."**

REGGY:

**"I had no idea I was missing. Tattoos – plastic surgery – fake boobies – it's impossible to tell what's real any more."**

TOOTIE:

**"I had no idea you were so old fashioned."**

REGGY:

**"It's a little known fact, but silicone breasts are actually quite dangerous."**

SHORTY:

**"Not if the operation is done under sterile conditions in a hospital."**

REGGY:

**"I'm not talkin' about the surgery. I'm talkin' afterward. When enhanced knockers are set loose in polite society, sometimes they can get too close to a heat source, explode and injure innocent bystanders."**

SHORTY:

**"Have you gone mental again?"**

REGGY:

**"It's a recognized fact. I read an article in last week's *Midnight Star* newspaper, 'cause inquiring minds wanna know."**

SHORTY:

**"Know what?"**

REGGY:

**"The Star reported that the first problem occurs during your common everyday house fire. Some 'broad' with artificial bazzooms gets trapped inside. Firemen rush in unaware of her dangerous melting tits. The next thing they know – BAM – hit by an exploding breast, same as if it were cooking too long in a microwave. The *Star* warns that because of the rise in the number of implants, more people are now injured annually by exploding breasts than by exploding cats. It's a fact. And that ain't all."**



TOOTIE:

**“There’s more?”**

REGGY:

**“Cremations have become dangerous for the same reason. I wouldn’t wanna be a funeral director in this world gone crazy. Just image if somethin’ of yours exploded during your final melt-down. That’s not the way to take your last bow – your corpse propelled through the air by vaporized silicone. (Reggy turns to Waldo.) Don’t you agree, Waldo? (Waldo shrugs his shoulders.) People just don’t seem to understand what’s important in life. Why make a fuss over nonsense like fake tits, the Yankees, EZ Pass, and full-body tattoos. Doesn’t anyone question the true reason we was put on this here spinning planet earth?”**

SHORTY:

**“I think about it on occasion. I’ve decided that it involves for the most part drinking beer and watching football.”**

REGGY:

**“The meaning of life. Don’t you care? Actually, the question comes up more than you might think.”**

TOOTIE:

**“It does?”**

REGGY:

**“Yup. Why just the other day I was shopping at Wigglesman’s for one of their barbecued chickens. The check-out clerk asked me if I had found everything I had been looking for. I told her no, and that I had been searching for years. Since she was obviously interested, I asked her what was her primary objective. Know what she said?”**

TOOTIE:

**"I can't imagine."**

REGGY:

**"She was still searching for her very own Fred Astaire, so she could finally dance backwards in high heels."**

SHORTY:

**"That's kinda sweet."**

REGGY:

**(He ponders for a moment as he takes a sip of beer.) "I'm so old I can still recall when things actually made sense and I wasn't so damned confused."**

TOOTIE:

**"When was that, exactly?"**

REGGY:

**"I can remember attending junior high school, and all the doors to the building were unlocked. There were no cops patrolling the hallways, and no students were ever arrested or shot."**

SHORTY:

**"Those sure were the days of innocence. We didn't know how good we had it. I wonder why things changed?"**

REGGY:

**"That's an easy one, pal. There was no violence on TV twisting impressionable minds in the wrong direction. When we was growin' up, no one got shot on camera."**

SHORTY:

**“You sure?”**

REGGY:

**“All the cowboys – Gene Autry, Hopalong Cassidy, the Lone Ranger – once in a while they might shoot a gun out of some bad guy’s hand, but no blood was every spilled. Superman simply ducked at the last minute whenever some villain dared to throw a spent gun at him. Back then, there was an unspoken rule: mayhem did not take place in plain view. And then one day, some demented Hollywood producer decided that violence equated with entertainment. Young minds were soon impregnated with the message that gratuitous violence was acceptable, normal, and a convenient means by which to resolve all problems.”**

TOOTIE:

**“I never thought about that before.”**

REGGY:

**“We have met the enemy, and it is us. When you troubleth your own house, you ultimately inherit the wind.”**

SHORTY:

**“There ain’t much we can do about it now. The genie’s out of the bottle.”**

REGGY:

**“Hire more cops, I guess, so they can roam more school hallways. (Reggy dismounts from his bar stool.) There was a time when people were more thoughtful and polite. Well, I gotta go. The Weather Channel is calling for a temperature inversion somewhere over the Gulf**

**Coast, so I need to stock up at Wiggleman's. Anyway, it's my wife's birthday and I have to pick up a lemon meringue pie. It's her favorite. I'll see ya tomorrow."**

SHORTY:

**"Tomorrow, pal."**

(Reggy walks across the stage to a grocery store delicatessen counter.

An aggressive woman riding in one of the grocery store's large motorized combination wheelchair-shopping carts rolls up to the counter. She activates *the next customer to be served* ticket dispenser machine three times as she ceremoniously takes three separate tickets. Reggy approaches and takes a separate ticket. The clerk turns around and faces these two customers. He pulls a chain as the number 93 appears on a display.)

FIRST CLERK:

**"May I help customer number 93 please?"**

LADY IN WHEELCHAIR:

(Loud and pushy) **"That's me, mister. (She displays her ticket.) I'll start with a large container of macaroni salad, two pounds of domestic salami sliced paper thin, a pound of American cheese cut for sandwiches, and three pounds of liverwurst. Oh ... and wrap each pound separately."**

FIRST CLERK:

**"Coming right up, ma'am."** (A second clerk enters from a back room and appears at the counter. He pulls the chain as the number 94 is displayed.)

SECOND CLERK:

**"May I help customer number 94?"**

LADY IN WHEELCHAIR:

(Instantaneously) **"You betcha. I'll take a quart of cucumber salad, a half dozen dyed eggs, and a handful of beef jerky."**

REGGY:

(Incredulous) **"Wait just a minute there, lady! You're already being served!"**

LADY IN WHEELCHAIR:

(Aggressively) **"Tell me something I don't already know, Studley."**

REGGY:

(Indignant) **"You can't have two clerks serve you simultaneously. Each customer only gets one number!"**

LADY IN WHEELCHAIR:

**"Says who? You've obviously got this delicatessen confused with the social security office or your military draft board. Them people only give out one number per customer. Now this place is like the state lottery or the department of transportation. You can order as many license plates as you want, if you're willing to pay, and I intend to pay for all the food I'm about to eat."**

REGGY:

**"That's not the point. I'm the next customer in line!"**

LADY IN WHEELCHAIR:

**"Maybe so, but I have number 94 and you don't, so stop trying to squeeze ahead. Wait your turn like a nice boy, you claim jumper."**

REGGY:

(Outraged) **"You can't take two tickets in a row!"**

LADY IN WHEELCHAIR:

**"I didn't. I took three."**

THIRD CLERK:

(A third clerk appears at the counter and pulls the chain. The number 95 is displayed.)

**"Number 95. Who has number 95?"**

LADY IN WHEELCHAIR:

(Raises her hand) **"That's me."** (She displays her ticket.) **"I'll take a pound of goat cheese, a slab of bacon, a quart of coleslaw, and four servings of tapioca pudding."**

REGGY:

(Angry) **"The heck you will! You can't use three numbers in a row. You're monopolizing all three delicatessen clerks! There are other people waiting!"**

LADY IN WHEELCHAIR:

**"I'm in a hurry. What's your point?"**

REGGY:

(Outraged) **"There's an unwritten law – just one number to a customer!"**

LADY IN WHEELCHAIR:

(Unconvinced) **"Where's it say that?"**

REGGY:

(Exasperated) **"Nowhere. That's why it's unwritten, you idiot!"**

FIRST CLERK:

(Hands a container of macaroni salad over the counter to the Lady In Wheelchair. She struggles to reach for it.) **"Here's your macaroni salad, lady."**

(Lady In Wheelchair stands up, walks away from the wheelchair and grasps the container of macaroni salad. She sits back in her mobile seat.)

REGGY:

(Astonished) **"Hey, you're no invalid! You're not handicapped!"**

LADY IN WHEELCHAIR:

**"I never said I was."**

REGGY:

**"But you're using one of the store's wheelchairs! There's an unwritten law that only -"**

LADY IN WHEELCHAIR:

(Interrupts) **"Says who? I find this mobile shopping device to be quite convenient. If some cripple also needs one, they'll have to wait for the next available cart. Any golfer will tell you about tee times and cart availability."**

REGGY:

**"But you're able to walk!"**

LADY IN WHEELCHAIR:

**"What's your point? Where's it written that a physically fit person can't use a motorized wheelchair? I rarely go anywhere without one. Whenever I fly, I get to board the plane first. When I'm on vacation, people are very accommodating. I always roll to the head of the line at Disney World."** (She turns to the clerks as she points at her watch.) **"Make it snappy, fellas. Where the hell is my liverwurst?"**

(Reggy digs in his shopping cart and produces the lemon meringue pie he had purchased for his wife, and approaches the Lady In Wheelchair.)

LADY IN WHEELCHAIR:

**“You wouldn’t dare! After all, I’m a cripple!”**

(Reggy prepares to throw the pie in her face as the stage lights are simultaneously extinguished.

The audience hears the sound of the pie hitting her face.)

**End of Scene 8**



## **NINTH SCENE – THE WAITRESS**

(Reggy enters Shorty's Bar and sits upon his usual barstool. Without instruction, Shorty pours Reggy a beer. Waldo and Tootie are seated upon their bar stools.)

**REGGY:**

**“Does it ever bother you when someone doesn't play by the rules or takes a shortcut at everyone else's expense?”**

**SHORTY:**

**“Shortcut?”**

**REGGY:**

**“Like failing to pay their fair share of taxes, or driving a car without insurance. Know what I mean?”**

**SHORTY:**

**“What brought this on?”**

**REGGY:**

**“Somethin' happened last week that got me to thinkin'. I was a witness in a courtroom to the administration of Justice. I watched as they tried to balance the Scales.”**

**TOOTIE:**

**“What Scales?”**

**REGGY:**

**“The Scales of Justice! It all started over at the Scenic View Diner. I go there once in a while for breakfast. Last week they was havin' one of their unadvertised 'specials,' so I really lucked out. Well there I was studying their new upgraded menu, and I come upon**

this little note printed in red ink announcing that senior citizens get a ten percent discount. Imagine that – a ‘special’ *and* a discount. I mean, it don’t get much better than that.”

TOOTIE:

“I’m getting’ hungry just thinkin’ about it.”

REGGY:

“But the menu don’t state how old you gotta be to qualify for ‘senior citizen’ status. I mean how old do you gotta be? It’s unclear. Now take the municipal golf course. You get a dollar off when you reach fifty-five. And there’s free checking at the bank soon as you turn sixty. Discount tickets at the theatre start at sixty-five. Full social security kicks in at sixty-six, if you’re still breathin’. It’s so confusing, so I called over the waitress to get the answer straight from the horse’s mouth.”

TOOTIE:

“Well, what did she say?”

REGGY:

“She studies me up and down, head to foot, and says ‘Honey – you’ll do’ and then she walked away.”

SHORTY:

“Well, how old do you gotta be?”

REGGY:

“I dunno. She never said. But when she took my order, I got the discount and the ‘special’ too. And then things began to happen.” (Reggy dismounts from his barstool and walks over to a restaurant table and two chairs. He takes a seat. A waitress, Agnes, approaches Reggy. She is

crewing gun, has a pencil behind her ear, and wears a checkered dress with an apron. She is about 50 years old and appears to have seen it all during her career as a waitress.)

AGNES:

**“What’ll it be, Hun?”**

REGGY:

**“Breakfast. Two eggs over easy. A muffin and some coffee, please.”**

AGNES:

**“We’re havin’ a ‘special’ today. Scrapple at no extra charge. It comes with.”**

REGGY:

**“With what?”**

AGNES:

**“It just comes with. You want a slab?”**

REGGY:

**“Scrapple? Isn’t that composed of parts of the pig nobody really wants?”**

AGNES:

**“Not exactly. The pig uses ‘em, and so do we. The snout, the earlobes, the unmentionables.**

**We grind ‘em into a paste. Home made. It comes with.”**

REGGY:

**“And people actually eat that?”**

AGNES:

**“Some hard - some soft.”**

REGGY:

**“I beg your pardon?”**

AGNES:

**“Some customers like their slab fried ‘hard’; some like their scrapple sautéed into a soft mush. It’s like the unending debate over Matzo balls. Some like their balls hard and some like ‘em spongy. You want some scrapple? It comes with.”**

(Agnes steps into the shadows as Reggy turns to address Shorty.)

REGGY:

**“That’s when it happened. Agnes musta slipped on some scrapple that had fallen or was dumped on the floor. Anyway, down she went, in a pile. I think she broke her arm. She was in a lot of pain. So a week goes by, and don’t I receive a subpoena in the mail. Seems she filed for workers’ compensation, and I was asked to attend the hearing to testify whether her injury was job-related. After I gave my statement, I stayed to watch the rest of the proceedings. I had never witnessed the Scales of Justice in action before.”**

SHORTY:

**“The actual Scales of Justice. That must have been somethin’ to see.”**

(Reggy walks into a courtroom and takes a seat as a spectator. A Judge presides at the Bench.

Agnes sits in the witness box, her left hand raised as she takes an oath.)

JUDGE:

**“Ms. Anglemeyer, do you swear that you shall tell the truth and nothing but the truth, so help you God?”**

AGNES:

**“When?”**

JUDGE:

**“Right now would be helpful. It’s not that difficult. I just read about some parrot that took the oath with very little difficulty.”**

AGNES:

**“I’m sorry. I can only raise my left arm. I broke the other one when I slid on the floor.”**

JUDGE:

**“This insurance report states that you slipped on an unidentifiable slimy grey substance. Is that what happened?”**

AGNES:

**“Scrapple, Your Courtship, Sir. To the untrained eye it might appear to be a miniature cow pie, but it’s just good ol’ country scrapple. It sticks to your ribs and sometimes to the floor. Occupational hazard. It comes with.”**

JUDGE:

**“With what?”**

AGNES:

**“Every meal whenever there’s a scrapple special. Most other times we don’t get too many orders for it. It’s kind of an acquired taste.”**

JUDGE:

**“So you slipped on some brown mushy stuff piled on the floor ...”**

AGNES:

**“ ... Scrapple ... and broke my arm. So I’m here to get compensated ‘whiles’ I’m temporarily out of work recuperatin’.”**

JUDGE:

**“Quite understandable. Now as you know, your compensation payment will be based upon a percentage of your weekly earnings.”**

AGNES:

**“Sounds fair enough to me. I’m ready to receive my first check today if that’s ok with you.”**

JUDGE:

**“Ms. Anglemeyer ...”**

AGNES:

**“What?”**

JUDGE:

**“First we need to know what you earned on average each week.”**

AGNES:

**(Ponders for a moment.) “That’s a tough one, Your Courtship Sir. See, it varies with the tips.”**

JUDGE:

**“Of course, but what did you report last year to the IRS as your average income?”**

AGNES:

**“That’s a tough one, too. See, I guess you could say that I worked at the diner, but not really.”**

JUDGE:

**“I beg your pardon?”**

AGNES:

**"I was workin' *under the table* to make sure it wouldn't actually count."**

JUDGE:

**"What wouldn't count?"**

AGNES:

**"The money I made, silly."**

JUDGE:

**"You didn't report your income?"**

AGNES:

**"Of course not. If I'd have done that, the IRS woulda taken a big chunk of it, I'd lose my welfare payments, and my child support would have decreased. Do I look stupid or somethin'?"**

JUDGE:

**"We can get back to that later. Tell me, do you have any idea how much money you actually earned?"**

AGNES:

**"Sure. I keep two sets of books. One has a running total of all my tips, 'cause I'm a real stickler for accuracy. The other set's for the government bean counters, in case they start snoopin' around."**

JUDGE:

**"Now we're finally getting somewhere. How much money did you earn?"**

AGNES:

**"That's kinda personal, your Judgeship. Do you really need to know?"**

JUDGE:

**“Actually, it’s the reason we all convened here today, in breathless anticipation of this important disclosure. How do you expect me to award you money from a governmental fund, if you failed to pay into it?”**

AGNES:

**“Good question, your Judgeship. But I’ve got a question or two, myself. Know why I’m here today without an attorney? Can’t afford one. Know why I’m steppin’ around piles of scrapple six days a week at a diner you might think twice about patronizing? ‘Cause I’m broke. No medical insurance, no pension plan, no savings. See, I didn’t get the opportunity to attend law school – not with six younger brothers and sisters to feed. Didn’t even graduate from high school.**

**Last week the government launched another space probe toward Jupiter to determine eight years from now if there’s water somewhere on that planet. Frankly, I don’t care if Jupiter is covered with crystal clear Olympic swimming pools. It’s a waste of my money – money I don’t have – and money the government would continue to squander if I were to pay taxes I can’t afford. Now if I ever earn what a judge gets just in vacation benefits, I’d be willing to reconsider my position.”**

**(Reggy walks back to Shorty’s Bar as the lights are extinguished on the Courtroom. He sits on his barstool.)**

SHORTY:

**“So tell me already – did the judge award the waitress some compensation?”**



REGGY:

**"I dunno. He said he would make up his mind in due course. Then they turned out the lights and everyone went home. Life sure can be confusing."**

WALDO:

(Waldo looks up and to everyone's surprise speaks for the first time.) **"It doesn't have to be."**

SHORTY:

**"Waldo, did you just say something? I haven't heard you utter a word in the last ten years!"**

WALDO:

**"I guess I didn't have that much to discuss. As I was saying, life don't need to be so confusing. All you need in order to get the answers is one of these here iphones, equipped with a few helpful 'apps' of your choice."** (Waldo reaches into his pocket and produces an iphone.)

REGGY:

**"What's an 'app'?"**

WALDO:

(Waldo ignores the question.) **"I don't know how I ever lived without one of these. Yesterday it recorded my blood pressure and pulse to confirm that I wasn't dead yet. When I push this indicator the correct amount of Alpo is automatically placed on a mini-home conveyor belt, and my dog don't starve. See this little icon? It activates my lawn sprinklers, this one is a thesaurus that automatically completes any unfinished cross-word puzzles, and this one over here displays the earth's up to the moment weather patterns."** (Waldo studies his iphone.) **It looks like Greenland is in for another storm."**

REGGY:

**“What’s an ‘app’?”** (Waldo ignores the question.)

WALDO:

**“This little device automatically balances my checkbook, periodically lowers the temperature in my bedroom when it senses I’m not there, records all the important football games while deleting the ads, sends for Chinese take-out every Tuesday, and can tell me the name of any recording artist and the song he’s singing on the radio. I can place a bet on any horserace in the country without saying a word. It pays my utility bills, and confirms the accuracy of my monthly EZPass statement.”**

REGGY:

**“What’s an ‘app’?”**

WALDO:

(Waldo continues to ignore Reggy.) **“I use it to start my car. Last week I forgot where I had parked. The phone sensed I was in trouble because my blood pressure went up, and sent me an email with a map and directions. I never have to worry about lost car keys no more. Best of all, anyone can email or text me night or day. I’m connected 24-7. Here, take a look.”** (Waldo hands Reggy the iphone. Reggy studies it.)

REGGY:

**“Amazing. (Reggy shakes it.) Does it talk?”**

WALDO:

**“It can simultaneously translate any three known languages into English, including my favorites - Pennsylvania Dutch and Pig Latin. It’s both the Library of Congress and the**

**Encyclopedia Britannica sitting in the palm of your hand. You'll never need to speak to another human being again."**

REGGY:

**"I was afraid of that, Waldo. Doesn't that concern you?"** (Waldo shrugs his shoulders as Reggy returns the iphone to Waldo. Reggy turns to address Shorty.) **Here's two bucks for the beer. I'll see ya tomorrow night. Maybe we'll talk some more."**

SHORTY:

**"You bet, Reggy.** (Reggy hands Shorty two dollars as he leaves the bar. Shorty turns toward his cash register, opens the cash drawer, but stops short as he looks at the currency and mutters to himself.) **If that bellhop can keep two bucks for himself, so can I. Sometimes it don't hurt to have a second set of books like that waitress hustlin' scrapple. Sometimes you just gotta put your faith in the positive retention of negative cash flow, and hope for the best. Figuring out the meaning of life can take a little longer."** (Shorty places the money in his shirt pocket as the stage lights dim.)

**End of Play**