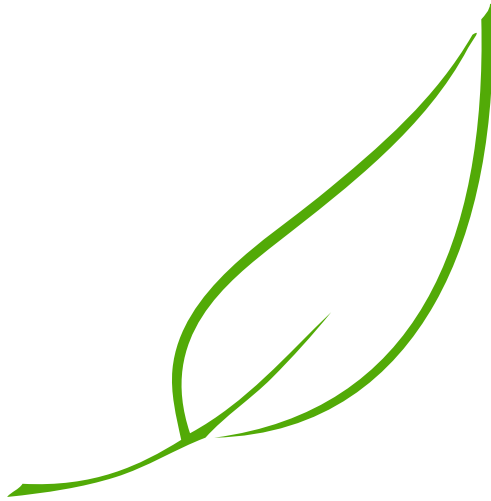


# OH, WHAT A CIRCUS

by Ken Bradbury  
and Robert L. Crowe



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# **OH, WHAT A CIRCUS**

*A Play in Two Acts by*

**Ken Bradbury and Robert L. Crowe**

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## Act One

*(Light up on Ringmaster Chuck. He has a battered top hat, a red vest and a small whip.)*

CHUCK: Hello, out there! My name is Chuck ... Well, not actually. The name is really Charles. I just call myself Chuck. But I would appreciate if you didn't call me anything. Too many chances for problems there. Welcome to the Circus! OK. Not an actual circus with lions and tigers and penguins but we like to think of this as a literary circus. So we are going to use a thinly veiled device of trying to force our stories into the square hole and it will be obvious to you that it doesn't work very well. What we lack in clever staging we make up in persistence.

We don't use the cheap construction of a three ring circus. Ours has seven rings. Don't worry. All you have to do is sit still and our lighting crew will do the rest. We will zip you from one scene to the next with the magic of theatre.

Speaking of magic ... Wait. I know this is a flimsy playwright trick but they won't let me out of this line. So, let me start again. Speaking of magic, our first offering in Ring 1, we call, "Do You Believe in Magic." Now do you agree with me? Isn't that a flimsy transition? At least the performers have substance.

*(Lights down, then up on the backstage of a theatre.)*

Scene 1: Do You Believe in Magic

ERIN: *(enters, tentatively, looks around, then ...)* Hello? *(nothing)* Anybody here? *(consults a note)* "123 Skiddoo Street. Presto Magic Theatre." Hello?

PRESTO: *(entering)* Presto!

ERIN: Huh?

PRESTO: I am the Great Professor Presto! Presto!

ERIN: Okay. Uh ... are you the one who advertised for ...

PRESTO: Presto!

ERIN: What?

PRESTO: I am the Great Professor Presto! Presto!

ERIN: Maybe I should go.

PRESTO: *(grabbing him and moving him into the area)* No! No! You have the right place! Yes! Yes! Presto! Presto!

ERIN: Are you the one who wants an assistant?

PRESTO: Indeed! Presto! I need an assistant! Have you ever done magic?

ERIN: You're a magician?

PRESTO: Magician? Not just a magician! A prestidigitator! A conjurer! A wizard of the magic arts!

ERIN: Wow.

PRESTO: Wow indeed! I am the King of Wow! The Duke of Illusion! The Lord of Sorcery!

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ERIN: No kidding. You any good?

PRESTO: (*grabbing his heart*) Ahhh! You have cut me to the quick, young man! "Any good?" Any good indeed! I have studied with the world's greatest magicians! Perhaps you've heard of the Great Ting-Tang-Walla-Walla-Bing-Banga of Trotsylvania?

ERIN: Did he play for the Cardinals?

PRESTO: What are Cardinals?

ERIN: Never mind. So can I get a job?

PRESTO: Ah! Only the most skilled hands can work with the Great Professor Presto! Do you have skilled hands?

ERIN: (*looking at his hands*) Well, this one's pretty good. This other one's willing to learn.

PRESTO: Excellent! Excellent! We have a show in five minutes! Get ready!

ERIN: What?

PRESTO: The audience is out there! We must prepare for the Magic Show!

ERIN: But I don't know what to do!

PRESTO: Never fear! I will teach you as we go! Remember! I am a magician! Presto!

ERIN: Yeah ... presto.

PRESTO: The first trick will be the Magic Hat.

ERIN: Magic hat?

PRESTO: Yes! You get down into this box and hand me the things I pretend to take out of my magic hat.

ERIN: That's magic?

PRESTO: Get in the box.

ERIN: But ...

PRESTO: You want this job?

ERIN: I'm in the box. (*hops into imaginary box, on his knees*)

PRESTO: Open the curtains! Voilà! Good evening ladies and gentlemen! Sit back and prepare to be amazed ... stupefied ... mesmerized! Courtesy of Professor Presto!

ERIN: Now?

PRESTO: (*stage whisper*) Quiet, box. (*moving upstage of Eric and removing an imaginary hat*) I will now remove from my magic hat the most amazing assortment of objects! A rabbit! (*reaches in ... feels around*) A rabbit! (*feels some more ... stage whisper*) Give me the rabbit!

ERIN: It's dark! I can't see anything in here!

PRESTO: The soft, fuzzy thing, you idiot! (*to the audience*) I will now pull a rabbit from my hat! (*he pulls out something ... looks at it*) A Kleenex!

ERIN: That's all I had in my pocket!

PRESTO: Aha! The bunny has a cold! What a funny bunny! (*reaches in again*) I will now produce a rabbit! (*looks at the object*) Who wears size 9 shoes?

ERIN: Hey! That's mine!

PRESTO: The bunny is in here somewhere! I know it is! Here, bunny-bunny-bunny. (*pulls Erin's head up through "the hat"*) A ... (*looks at him*) A ... dumb bunny! (*bowing*) Thank you very much! Thank you very much!

ERIN: (*standing*) I couldn't find the rabbit.

PRESTO: I forgot. Work's been slow. I think I ate him last night. (*to the audience*) For Professor Presto's next trick! The Saw of Death!

ERIN: Saw of What?

PRESTO: Before your very eyes, I will take this handsome young man, cut his body in half with the Saw of Death, then put him back together, safe and sound.

ERIN: Oh, no.

PRESTO: (*aside*) Remember, it's a trick.

ERIN: So was the rabbit.

PRESTO: He will recline here on this table ... (*moving two chairs to form a table*)... awaiting the Saw of Death! (*practically has to push Erin down onto the table, lying on his back*) I will place the magic cape over his trembling body. (*does so*)

ERIN: You got that right.

PRESTO: And Professor Presto will present ... (*producing an imaginary saw*) The Saw of Death.

ERIN: Yikes. Have you done this before?

PRESTO: Many times.

ERIN: Successfully?

PRESTO: Depends on what you call success.

ERIN: Uh ... what happened to your other assistant?

PRESTO: I had to cut him.

ERIN: What?

PRESTO: Out of the act. He kept squirming.

ERIN: Was he the guy I met as I came in?

PRESTO: Was he really short?

ERIN: Yeah.

PRESTO: That was him. Robert. Actually, we shortened it to Rob after this trick. (*to the audience*) Watch as the Saw of Death slices him in half! (*to Erin*) You're squirming.

ERIN: I can't help it.

PRESTO: Of course you can. Just think of something else. This won't hurt. It's a trick. (*to the audience as he begins to saw*) The Saw of Death!

ERIN: Hey! That's my shirt! You cut my shirt!

PRESTO: Sorry. Now hold still! (*to the audience*) The Saw of Death!

Sawing! Sawing! (*as he saws, he pushes down on Erin's stomach, causing the two chairs to slide apart and making Erin's body sag between the chairs*) Ohh! Feel the pain!

ERIN: I do!

PRESTO: Not you! The audience! Sawing! Sawing! Sawing! (*raises saw as Erin lies there, his rear end sagging between two chairs, covered by an*

*imaginary sheet*) ! Voilà! Professor Presto has done it again! And now! Abracadabra! Chitty-chitty Bang-bang! (*as he pushes Erin's body up and scoots the chairs back together, then pulling off the imaginary sheet*) ! Voilà!

ERIN: I'm alive!

PRESTO: The Great Professor Presto! (*takes a bow*)

ERIN: (*jumping up and bowing*) Thank you!

PRESTO: Not you!

ERIN: But ...

PRESTO: You're an assistant! You do not take bows! You take out the garbage! Now get ready for the next trick!

ERIN: Next trick?

PRESTO: The grand finale!

ERIN: Which is?

PRESTO: The Fiery Inferno!

ERIN: Oh, no.

PRESTO: What do you mean?

ERIN: I've never done it.

PRESTO: Neither have I, but I've always wanted to try it.

ERIN: You've never ...?

PRESTO: My assistant will now get ready for the Fiery Inferno!

ERIN: Why don't I like the sound of this?

PRESTO: Professor Presto will tie his assistant to this chair ... (*he throws Erin into a chair*) ... tie his hands securely behind his back ... (*he does so*) ... and cover his entire body with this flammable jet plane fuel!

ERIN: Hold it!

PRESTO: What?

ERIN: I quit. I resign. I retire.

PRESTO: This is the grand finale!

ERIN: You're tellin' me. Look professor, I'm not ready for my grand finale.

PRESTO: I'm telling you, it's just a trick.

ERIN: But you've never tried it before.

PRESTO: I read about it.

ERIN: Read about it?

PRESTO: I tried it on my Barbie Doll.

ERIN: Your Barbie Doll? What happened? (*Presto points to something on the floor.*) That blob of melted plastic?!

PRESTO: Something went wrong. Too much fuel, I think. Don't worry, I've almost got it down. Now, Professor Presto will ...

ERIN: Almost? You've *almost* got it down? What's that supposed to mean?! Are you crazy?!

PRESTO: Perhaps! Now... for the grand finale!

ERIN: Let me outta here!

PRESTO: I hold in my hand, the match ...

ERIN: (*blowing at the match*) Out! Out!

PRESTO: You blew out my match! What are you trying to do? Ruin my trick?

ERIN: Yes! (*shouting to the audience*) Quick! You guys in the audience! Get outta here, quick! This guy's nuts! He's gonna blow the place up. (*to Presto*) They're laughing. They think it's part of the trick.

PRESTO: Yes! Yes! I like it! We'll keep that bit. Now ... I will light the match.

ERIN: I'm outta here! (*he falls to the floor, his hands still tied behind his back, and begins to roll, inch, scoot his way toward the door*) I quit! I quit!

PRESTO: Thank you, ladies and gentlemen! Thank you! (*running to where Erin has rolled*) That was wonderful!

ERIN: Huh?

PRESTO: Listen to them! They loved it! Magic and Comedy! They're screaming for more!

ERIN: More?

PRESTO: (*helping Erin to his feet*) We have a future together, my friend!

ERIN: Really?

PRESTO: I can just see it! I strap six sticks of dynamite to your chest, I light the fuse ... (*Erin begins to edge away, unseen by Presto*) ... No! No! I tie you to a wild horse and send you across a raging river ... Wait! I've got it! (*by now Erin is gone*) You jump off the edge of the Grand Canyon holding a balloon and ... (*he turns, sees Erin has escaped*) ... uh ... (*to the audience*) Ladies and Gentlemen! Our final trick! The Amazing Disappearing Man!

*(Lights down and back up on Chuck)*

CHUCK: I'm going to disappear in a short minute but I have a brief job to do first. Anyone who has gone to school, and I hope that is most of you .... Well, everyone knows that some kids pick on other kids. It's been around for a long time. It is like the circus: The rhinoceros pushes around the donkey, the donkey picks on the chicken ... I know ... our circus has some strange beasts. Anyway, the barnyard bullies have been around for a long time. It's good that a spotlight has been turned on the issue and we are doing our part. We turn the spotlight on Terri who wants to tell you about her school.

*(Lights down and back up on Terri)*

Scene 2: I Am Not a Bully

TERRI: I saw her, but I didn't say anything. Yeah, Mom was mad, but I couldn't say anything.

Mom turned to me in the car and said, "Terri, you've got to write things down. And pay attention when people tell you things."

I replied, "Mom, I thought it was today ... honest. Maybe they changed the date and didn't tell me."

She shot me a quick look and said, “We could have gone up to the house and asked.”

“That would have been really embarrassing.”

I hadn’t forgotten. This was the day of Mallory’s birthday party. She’d invited the whole class. You see ... Mallory’s not too popular. I mean, she brings it on herself the way she acts and talks. It wasn’t my fault. She made these invitations and she invited our whole class to her birthday party ... I mean everybody. Lots of other kids said they weren’t going to go but I slipped and told Mom about the date so when we pulled up to Mallory’s house, nobody was there. I didn’t tell Mom but I could see into the back yard ... balloons and food and a big Happy Birthday banner ... and I saw more than that. I saw Mallory’s face peeking through the curtains in her front window. She was waiting for somebody ... anybody to come to her party. (*a pause, then*) I didn’t want to be the only one there. I told Mom it was the wrong date and we drove on.

Look, I am not a bully because I didn’t do anything.

Like this kid ... Jeremy. He was sort of ... well ... you know ... heavy. He knew he had a weight problem and he was real quiet and nice to everybody. One day in English class we had to write about our dream job ... what we would be if we could be anything we wanted. I said I wanted to be a chef and own my own restaurant in New York and be on one of those cooking shows. We had lots of cool answers ‘cause we took it seriously. The teacher asked us to read them in front of the class so we took turns and when Jeremy got up there he said he wanted to play football. Not be a pro or anything, just be able to play football well. The kids thought he was joking I guess because they laughed. I mean, Jeremy was always saying funny things and we just thought he was kidding again.

He stood up in front of the class and said, “More than anything in the whole world, I want to play football. I don’t care if I’m any good at it. I just want a chance to play.”

You gotta admit, it was kind of ridiculous. Jeremy even has trouble getting in some of the seats at school because of his size and to think about him running down the football field, well ... we all laughed.

He didn’t finish reading. He asked if he could leave the room. He called his Mom and went home sick.

But look, I didn’t do anything. You can’t call me a bully if I don’t do anything. I saw him standing in the hallway waiting for his mom when class was over and I didn’t even say a word, so you can’t accuse me of being a bully.

I think everybody’s getting worked up over nothing sometimes. Like when the girls in our class started texting each other about those new kids. They had this funny accent and we just sort of texted each other about how they talked. We weren’t trying to bully anybody, we were just kidding. Then some of the girls started sending messages to the new kid who was in our

class and she got all upset and said we were all against her. That's ridiculous, because I didn't do anything.

And Facebook? Lots of kids say things on Facebook when they're just teasing. Besides, you can always take it off later. I mean, it's out there somewhere, but that doesn't count does it?

It's just not fair to blame all of us when only a few of us do something. This girl would always come to school wearing these old clothes ... like old-fashioned or something and this one kid ... not me ... this one kid came up to her at lunch hour and said, "No freaks allowed at this table." I wasn't there. I didn't hear it. And I wouldn't have said something so mean. But she started eating out in the hallway. She sat on the floor in the hallway and when the teacher caught her she said she couldn't eat in the cafeteria so the teacher said that she had to eat in the cafeteria but the girl said she wouldn't ... so she quit eating lunch. She'd go to the library during lunch period and ... I don't know ... read I guess.

I saw her go out in the hall but I didn't know what was going on. When she came over to our table it was already full and she just stood looking for a place to sit but the only place was beside the boys so she tried to sit real quiet at the end of their table. That's when he came up and told her "No freaks allowed." ... and that's when she stopped eating.

Sure, there are kids who are bullies but the point is, I'm not one of them because I didn't do anything. How can you be a bully when you don't do anything?

And then ... (*a long pause*) then it happened to me. Me. I've always had lots of friends but sometimes ... sometimes that doesn't matter. It was after P.E. ... sometimes locker rooms are the worst place for bullies. It was after P.E. and I heard these girls around the corner giggling and gossiping about some kid ... how they'd taken their cell phone and took a picture of her that was really embarrassing and how they were going to put it outside on the wall of the hallway where everybody could see it. I guess I thought that was pretty funny so I ran over to see the picture ... It was me.

(*a long pause, then*) I mean ... I got the picture away from them, but ... it was me they were making fun of. Even my best friend was standing there laughing with them. After school I asked her how she could do such a thing to me and she said, "Terri, I didn't take the picture. I was just standing there. I didn't do anything."

"I didn't do anything."

(*a long pause, then*) She didn't hurt my feelings by not doing anything. She made me cry by *not* doing anything. By just standing there.

You've seen them. I don't care how old you are ... even if you're grown up ... you've seen them. The boy at lunch who always gets pushed out of line ... the girl who waits 'til the last minute to come to class because nobody will talk to her if she gets there early ... the kid who's chosen last when they play a game ... who they always try to knock out first in dodge

ball. It's like ... it's almost like they don't have feelings so it's okay. You say, "I'm just glad it's not me."

And you know what? Lots of people don't grow out of it. They keep on being bullies their whole life. And lots of kids who get bullied ... well, they don't get over it either.

So I decided ... after it happened to me I decided that I'd never let it happen again to anyone else if I could help it. Okay, I've lost a few friends and I've had a few kids laugh at me, but after awhile it gets better ... not easy, just better.

*(looks at her audience a moment, then)* So what about you? Have you ever bullied someone? Have you ever done nothing when you knew that someone needed a friend? Ever been afraid of what people would think if you stood up for someone who needed help? If you say no, then you're probably lying to yourself.

Wanna know something? I am a bully. And if you've ever just done nothing and let it happen, then you are too. Okay, what you do is your business and I'm not going to tell you how to live your life but I just want to say that from now on, I'm different. I don't always do things perfect, but I'm never gonna let it happen again. I'm going to be a friend to the kids who need it. If I need to I'm even going to tell an adult if the bullying gets too bad. And if you don't like it ... well, that's too bad, too.

From this moment on ... I am not a bully!

*(Lights down and back up on Chuck)*

CHUCK: Bully for you, Terri. And for those of you in the audience who see bullying taking place ... let us know. We will loan you an elephant to stomp the bull out of them. We do some serious stuff tonight but this next ring ... Ring 3 if you're keeping track ... this next ring takes place in the locker room of a school gymnasium. We have spent no expense to recreate an entire locker room so use your imagination a bit. Oh, we have to go. It's halftime at the basketball game.

*(Lights down and back up on a gymnasium locker room)*

Scene 3: A Muddle in the Huddle

TIM: *(entering quickly with the others)* You did it!

PHILLIP: Did not!

TIM: I saw you do it!

PHILLIP: I tell ya, I didn't do it!

WES: We saw you do it!

PHILLIP: Look, the coach was just standin' there bendin' over to get a drink. I didn't even see him!

JOHN: You crashed right into him, Phil.

BILLIE: You creamed him with the equipment box.

TIM: (*looking down at the floor*) And now look at him. Out cold. Great. Half-time, score's tied and you just killed the coach.

PHILLIP: I didn't kill the coach! He's breathing!

WES: Sometimes they keep breathing after they're dead.

PHILLIP: They do not!

JOHN: Like ghosts ... that's the soul of the coach tryin' to get you ... so he can come after you, Phillip!

PHILLIP: (*bending down over the prostrate coach*) Oh, get real. He's just a little bit ... you know ...

BILLIE: Dead. He's a little bit dead.

PHILLIP: Stop sayin' that! He's just knocked out! He'll wake up in a minute and I'll tell him I'm sorry and everything will be okay and we can go back to playin' basketball.

JOHN: (*hand over his chest, fake tear in his eye*) We, the players of Hoopster Middle School dedicate the second half of our game to our dearly departed dead coach.

ALL BUT PHILLIP: Amen!

PHILLIP: Would you guys get serious?

BILLIE: Us get serious? You're the one who tried to kill our basketball coach! You can't get any more serious than that, Phil.

PHILLIP: The coach is not dead!

WES: Sure, tell his family that when they come to pick up his body and his sweat socks.

PHILLIP: Would you guys, stop it?

TIM: Hey guys, I hate to interrupt the funeral, but in five minutes we've got to go back out and play the second half with a dead coach.

PHILLIP: The coach is not dead!

TIM: Okay, so he's knocked out. You expect him to coach like that? You know, even if he wakes up you're not going to get much playing time in the second half, Phil.

PHILLIP: Come on, let's splash water on his face.

BILLIE: I think that only works in the movies, Phil.

WES: Yeah. You do that in real life and they drown.

PHILLIP: Well, what are we gonna do?

JOHN: We? We didn't do anything. You did it!

WES: You'll probably go to jail.

PHILLIP: What?!!

WES: (*as John takes his place as the judge and the others form an impromptu jury*) Gentlemen of the jury! This boy standing before you in his basketball uniform is ... guilty!

JOHN: I agree!

WES: You can't do that. You're the judge.

JOHN: Oh. Sorry.

WES: He ran into the locker room at half time, out of his mind happy because his team was tied for the first time all season, swung the athletic equipment case around and viciously murdered ...

PHILLIP: No way!

WES: ... viciously tried to murder the poor, helpless coach.

JOHN: Guilty!

WES: John, the judge can't say that.

JOHN: Hurry up. Let's hang him.

PHILLIP: John!

JOHN: Sorry.

WES: So, gentlemen of the jury ... how do you find the defendant?

BILLIE & TIM: Skinny and weird!

WES: I mean as to the charges.

JOHN: Guilty!

WES: John!

JOHN: Oops.

BILLIE & TIM: Guilty!

JOHN: Finally! My turn? (*Wes nods*) I hereby sentence him to two years scrubbing the shower stalls!

PHILLIP: What?!

BILLIE & TIM: Guilty!

JOHN: Three years washing all the dirty towels!

BILLIE & TIM: Guilty!

JOHN: And four years trying to get the smell out of this locker room!

BILLIE & TIM: Guilty! Guilty! Guilty!

PHILLIP: I protest!

WES: You can't. You're guilty.

PHILLIP: (*to his knees again, shaking the imaginary coach*) Come on, coach. Wake up! Wake up!

BILLIE: (*to an offstage character*) What? Oh ... uh ... okay.

TIM: Who was that?

BILLIE: The referee. He said we have three minutes to get onto the floor.

TIM: The coach is already there.

BILLIE: The basketball floor, you numbskull. What're we gonna do?

PHILLIP: I know!

TIM: What?

PHILLIP: We'll prop him up!

BILLIE: Do what?

PHILLIP: We'll carry him out there and prop him up on the bench so it'll look like he's coaching. Anybody got any sunglasses?

JOHN: Are you crazy! We'll never get by with that!

PHILLIP: You got any other ideas?

JOHN: (*they look at each other a moment, then all dive for the body of the coach in an effort to get him to sit up*) Come on, coach. Sit up.

WES: That's a good boy. Sit.

BILLIE: Sit.

PHILLIP: Please sit! (*they look at the imaginary form of the coach a moment, breathless, then as one they watch him fall over*)

TIM: He fell over. You just killed him again.

PHILLIP: I did not!

JOHN: Look, what if we say he got sick at halftime?

BILLIE: The way we play he's always sick.

JOHN: We'll tell 'em he had to stay in the locker room.

WES: It'll never work. You gotta have a coach. It's gotta be a rule, doesn't it?

JOHN: (*point at Phillip*) You.

PHILLIP: Huh?

JOHN: You gotta play the coach.

PHILLIP: No way!

JOHN: It's the only way, Phillip. You caused this and now you gotta fix it. Quick! Get the coach's pants and shirt off. (*Wes and Billie jump into action removing the coach's clothing*) (*to Phillip*) Strip.

PHILLIP: What?!

JOHN: Take off your pants. You got to wear the coach's clothes.

PHILLIP: No way!

TIM: (*behind him, removing Phil's drawers*) Zing!

PHILLIP: (*just standing there*) Those are my pants.

WES: (*handing Phil a pair of trousers*) No. These are your pants ... Coach.

PHILLIP: (*miming putting them on*) This is never gonna work.

JOHN: Just be quiet and put your pants on.

BILLIE: (*handing him the imaginary garment*) Here's your shirt, coach. Put me in to start the second half, would you? I feel hot.

PHILLIP: I feel stupid.

JOHN: You look great, Phil. I've always wanted to play for a coach with baggy pants.

PHILLIP: Funny.

WES: Come on ... practice before we go out there.

PHILLIP: Do what?

WES: Practice bein' a coach! (*imitating a blustering coach*) "Are you kidding?!! That was no foul!"

JOHN: "Come on ref, he was all over him!"

BILLIE: "Oh gimme a break! What are you, blind?"

TIM: "Time out! Time out! Call a time out you lame brains!"

PHILLIP: I can't do that!

JOHN: You gotta do that, Phil. You caused all this, now you gotta fix it.

TIM: (*moving Phil to a position just in front of the coach while the others move to one side*) Just stand over here ... now ... let's see your coach act.

PHILLIP: Come on, guys ...

JOHN: Do it, Phil.

PHILLIP: Oh, darn. (a pause as he tries to get his head around this) Okay, here goes. "Now I want you to go out there and play like you mean it! Stop doggin' it! Show me that you got what it takes to win this game!" (*but the boys' eyes widen as something is happening behind Phillip, something he cannot see*) "When I was your age I could run faster, I could jump higher, I could try harder than any of you guys! You gotta show me you want this game! You gotta show me you mean it! You gotta show me." (*but he notices that their expressions have changed and their faces have gone a bit white*) What? What's the matter? Am I that bad? You wanna tell me what's goin' on?

BILLIE: Uh ... the coach just woke up. You wanna tell him why you're wearing his pants and he's sitting there in his shorts?

PHILLIP: (*not yet turning around to see the coach*) You're kidding me.

JOHN: No.

PHILLIP: Please say you're kidding me.

JOHN: I'm kidding you.

PHILLIP: Thank goodness.

JOHN: And now I'm lying. Take a look behind you. (*Phil turns and looks up into the eyes of his angry coach*)

WES: Uh ... we gotta go.

BILLIE: Yeah ... we got a second half to play. (*as the four boys inch their way, backing toward the door and Phil is left there, paralyzed with fright*)

TIM: See ya on the court, coach.

WES: There's the buzzer.

PHILLIP: Coach, I can explain.

JOHN: Maybe he wants to put you in the game, Phil.

PHILLIP: I'm dead.

BILLIE: Uh ... guys?

JOHN, WES & TIM: Yeah?

BILLIE: Let's play ball!

JOHN, WES, & TIM: Let's play ball! (*they exit quickly, leaving Phil standing there ... looking not quite well as the curtain falls*)

(*Lights down and back up on Chuck*)

CHUCK: Those of you who have seen a real circus may have seen the little car that drives in the ring and about 20 people get out. Very funny scene. Well, we don't have anything like that. We do, however, have a driver in training and as soon as she finishes her practice driving ... and she needs just a bit more practice ... after that we may add the stuffed car. I wonder how she is doing. Let's turn on the bright lights and watch the *Girl Behind the Wheel*.



*(Lights down and back up on the inside of a car)*

Scene 4: Girl Behind the Wheel

FURLESE: This is it. I can't believe it, Monique. This is really it.

MONIQUE: Calm down.

FURLESE: The day I've dreamed of since first grade.

MONIQUE: You're kidding.

FURLESE: No! Haven't you? 16! Driver's license! My first car! Right here under my fingertips!

MONIQUE: Look Furlese, maybe today isn't the best day to start driving. You seem awfully ... you know... spastic.

FURLESE: Spastic? Spastic!!! I'm not spastic! I'm excited! I got an "A" in Driver's Ed, Monique! I was the first one to finish! Mr. Thompson said he wanted to get all my driving out of the way before the rest of the class.

MONIQUE: You didn't see a message in that?

FURLESE: He liked me!

MONIQUE: He was afraid of you. Look, let's just sit in your car a minute ... get the feel of things ... then we'll try it again tomorrow.

FURLESE: No way, Monique! I'm ready! Hang on!

MONIQUE: Oh, no.

FURLESE: I'll go slow. I promise.

MONIQUE: Seatbelt.

FURLESE: Huh?

MONIQUE: Put on your seatbelt.

FURLESE: We're just cruising around town! You want me to wrinkle my new top?

MONIQUE: Yes. Wrinkle it. Destroy it. I'm getting out unless you're buckled in.

FURLESE: *(buckling up)* Geesh. What a fuddy-duddy. Okay. Here we go. *(begins to start car)*

MONIQUE: Wait. I think we should pray.

FURLESE: Pray?

MONIQUE: Pray.

FURLESE: I didn't know you even went to church.

MONIQUE: It doesn't matter. I like breathing. Go ahead. You know how to do it.

FURLESE: Right here? In the driveway?

MONIQUE: God doesn't do driveways?

FURLESE: I mean ... of course, but ...

MONIQUE: Then pray.

FURLESE: All right. Dear Lord, thanks for this pretty day ...

MONIQUE: Skip the hellos. Get right to the danger.

FURLESE: Okay. Dear God, I hope we have a really good time.

MONIQUE: Forget the good time. Pray that we get back alive.

FURLESE: Why don't you do it?

MONIQUE: Because you're driving. You drive, you pray.

FURLESE: And I pray that we get back alive. That sounds so horrible. Scary.

MONIQUE: Say Amen.

FURLESE: Amen.

MONIQUE: Now drive ... slowly. (*Furlese turns the key, Monique grips her seat.*) Slow down! Slow down!

FURLESE: I'm still in "Park."

MONIQUE: I know. Even this is too fast.

FURLESE: (*putting the car into gear*) I know what I'm doing. Boy, this feels great! Driving at last! (*waving*) Hey, Jonna, look! I'm driving!

MONIQUE: Watch the road!

FURLESE: I am! Look, there's a bunch of kids at the Dairy Queen. Wave! Wave!

MONIQUE: I can't wave.

FURLESE: Why not?

MONIQUE: My fingers are deeply embedded into my seat. Just watch the road, Furlese! And slow down!

FURLESE: I'm not speeding! Okay, maybe just a little and ... what's that?

MONIQUE: What?

FURLESE: That sound.

MONIQUE: (*looks behind her*) A policeman. He's got his red lights on. You were speeding.

FURLESE: I was not speeding!

MONIQUE: Then it's the UPS man and he's trying to flag you down for a delivery. You're busted, Furlese! Pull over!

FURLESE: Oh, no.

MONIQUE: Twenty years in prison on your first day behind the wheel.

FURLESE: Oh, no.

MONIQUE: I'm going to hide in the back seat. (*begins to crawl into the back*)

FURLESE: (*stopping her*) Stop that! You'll make me look suspicious.

MONIQUE: We're stopped on the busiest street in town with red lights flashing behind us and you don't look suspicious?

FURLESE: He's coming up to my car.

MONIQUE: Yeah. They usually do that.

FURLESE: (*staring out her window*) He's looking at me.

MONIQUE: Lower your window. It's easier to talk.

FURLESE: Oh. (*lowers her window, then*) Uh ... hi, Sir.

MONIQUE: Great opening.

FURLESE: Quiet. (*to the policeman*) My what?

MONIQUE: Your license. That thing they gave you when you passed your test.

FURLESE: Where is it?

MONIQUE: How should I know? Try your billfold.

FURLESE: My billfold?

MONIQUE: The white thing in your purse.

FURLESE: My billfold.

MONIQUE: He's staring at you. He thinks you're on something. Hurry up.

FURLESE: (*digging around*) My billfold. Here. (*hands a card to the policeman*)

MONIQUE: That's your McDonald's gift certificate. He thinks you're bribing him.

FURLESE: Oh. (*digging more*) My billfold! Here!

MONIQUE: Lunch card.

FURLESE: Sorry. (*offers another item to the policeman*) Driver's license! It's brand new!

MONIQUE: Who would have guessed?

FURLESE: Where's he going?

MONIQUE: Back to his car. That's where they keep the handcuffs.

FURLESE: Handcuffs! Oh Monique! My first day! My very first day and I'm going to jail for driving!

MONIQUE: Were you speeding?

FURLESE: I don't know. I wasn't looking at the speedometer.

MONIQUE: Can I have your new gym outfit? They'll give you your own clothes in prison.

FURLESE: Monique!

MONIQUE: Don't worry. I'll take care of your dog.

FURLESE: My life is over!

MONIQUE: I've got it!

FURLESE: What?

MONIQUE: Cry. Mom says that women should cry when they're stopped by a cop.

FURLESE: I'm already crying!

MONIQUE: Then cry harder. Here he comes again!

FURLESE: (*putting on quite a sobbing show*) Oh, officer, I'm so, so, so sorry. I just got my license and I was nervous and I didn't notice how fast I was going and I was just excited ... and I don't want to go to jail!

MONIQUE: (*a long pause as Furlese looks at the policeman and Monique stares straight ahead*) (*finally*) What'd he say?

FURLESE: He wants to see my insurance card.

MONIQUE: You blew it.

FURLESE: What's an insurance card?

MONIQUE: A card that says you have insurance.

FURLESE: Do I?

MONIQUE: How should I know?

FURLESE: Maybe it's in the glove box ...

MONIQUE: (*she opens it and begins searching*) Will he take chewing gum? You've got a lot of that.

FURLESE: Hurry up!

MONIQUE: (*still searching*) My bracelet! I loaned you this two years ago!

FURLESE: Find the card, Monique!

MONIQUE: (*reading*) "State of \_\_\_\_\_." This looks like an insurance card.

FURLESE: (*grabbing it*) Gimme that. (*offering it to the officer*) Look sir! I'm insured! (*watches him, then*) He's going back to his car again. He was smiling.

MONIQUE: Maybe that's because I just handed you your Dad's fishing license.

FURLESE: What?

MONIQUE: Kidding! Kidding!

FURLESE: Why was he smiling, Monique? What's making him smile? It's like he's never seen anything like this before. (*Monique slowly turns to look at Fursele*) You're right. He \_\_\_\_\_ probably hasn't.

MONIQUE: Okay ... you're sixteen now. Twenty years would make you 36. You'll still have time to get married and get a job.

FURLESE: Thirty-six! Oh, my gosh!

MONIQUE: Of course you'll come out of prison a bitter old woman.

FURLESE: Oh, no!

MONIQUE: Probably a few teeth missing. And you'll need a wig.

FURLESE: Monique!

MONIQUE: You'll never fit into that gym outfit. Might as well give it up.

FURLESE: I am never driving again!

MONIQUE: Like you'll need a license in prison. You don't need a license to drive laundry carts.

FURLESE: (*bursts into tears*) Oh, Monique! This is terrible! This is just ... (*she looks out her window*) What? Yes, officer. It's my dad's car.

MONIQUE: He thinks you stole it.

FURLESE: Quiet. (*to the cop*) Yes sir, he owns it. (*takes a piece of paper from the officer*) Give this to him? My dad?

MONIQUE: (*takes the paper from her before Fursele has looked at it*) Let me see it.

FURLESE: Yes, officer. Yes, sir. Yes sir, I will sir. You ... you have a nice day, too. (*watches him go, then closes her eyes*) Go ahead. Read it to me. Does it say when they'll come pick me up?

MONIQUE: Your dad's not gonna like this.

FURLESE: (*eyes still closed*) I know. I know. He'll have to rent out my room and sell my treadmill. Go ahead. Read it.

MONIQUE: He's got a taillight out.

FURLESE: What?

MONIQUE: A taillight. On the back of the car. Your dad got a warning.

FURLESE: That's it?

MONIQUE: That's it.

FURLESE: No jury? No prison food?

MONIQUE: Sorry. You're stuck with the school cafeteria.

FURLESE: I'm still alive!

MONIQUE: Still alive.

FURLESE: Wow! This is great! This is wonderful, Monique! Wait 'til I get home and call my friends and tell 'em I'm not going to jail! (*starting car*) Let's go!

MONIQUE: (*beginning to unbuckle her seatbelt*) Hold it.

FURLESE: What're you doing?

MONIQUE: (*getting out of the car*) Walking.

FURLESE: Walking? You're ten blocks from your house! It's freezing outside!

MONIQUE: No problem. Believe me. (*closing door*) And someday when you get your marriage license?

FURLESE: Yeah?

MONIQUE: Don't call me. (*walks away from a puzzled Furlese*)

(*Lights down and back up on Chuck*)

CHUCK: "Don't call me!" I hear that all the time. When you came to our lovely circus tent today, did you see a group of people carrying signs? There was some type of demonstration ... and maybe more than one going on. I think they had scattered before you arrived but we have a special treat. Because we didn't want you to miss all the excitement, we recorded a couple of the protesters and we will play it back on our life-like screen. Here's how it looked earlier today.

#### Scene 5: I Protest

*There is a city bench at stage center. Chris, a nervous and intense person, is on one side of the stage and Alex, a very calm and casual person, is on the other side. They are unaware of each other. They are parading, holding signs and yelling at people and traffic going by.*

CRIS: Big business must go! Employers are the curse of the working class.

ALEX: (*casually*) Hey, there. If you get a chance, Vote "No."

CRIS: Corporations are ruining our lives. Go. Go!

ALEX: Vote "No." But if you don't want to, that's OK, too.

CRIS: They must go. (*chants*) You must know that they must go.

ALEX: Think it over. Vote "No" ... unless you have a better idea.

CRIS: Go!

ALEX: No!

(*They stop and look at each other for the first time. They walk to stage center.*)

CRIS: Oh. Hello.

ALEX: Hi, there.

CRIS: How you doin'?

ALEX: I'm tired. (*puts down placard*) I think I'll sit down a minute.

CRIS: Me, too. Good idea. How's it going?

ALEX: I don't know. Some days I wonder if anyone is paying attention.

CRIS: Isn't that the truth? Most people don't realize how difficult our job is.

ALEX: What are you protesting?

CRIS: The scourge of big business. Do you realize how the giant corporations are controlling our lives? They control the money, the jobs, the political candidates ... everything! We must bring attention to the puppet-like manipulation that these greedy conglomerates are wielding.

ALEX: Oh. Do you work in big business?

CRIS: I used to. One day my boss called me in and told me I was no longer with the company. "How can you do this?" I asked. "I've been with the company 7 years. I worked and toiled for the company 7 days a week. You have treated me like a slave. Like a slave! How can you fire me?" "Oh, I'm not firing you," he said. "I sold you." (*pause*) It was his idea of humor. Not so funny.

ALEX: That's too bad.

CRIS: And another thing. When I was hired he told me I'd get sick pay. When I opened my first paycheck, sure enough, I got sick.

ALEX: Oh.

CRIS: We had to work overtime ... all the time ... and never got any extra pay.

ALEX: I had an uncle who worked in a distillery. When they worked overtime, they got time and a fifth. He's the one who told me that excessive drinking was bad for your memory ... or your liver. He couldn't remember which one.

CRIS: You ever work in big business?

ALEX: Oh, sure. I've worked in a lot of businesses. Some not so big, though. I was most recently with an accounting firm. It was the "LB and C Company."

CRIS: LB&C?

ALEX: Laid Back and Cool. Their accounting motto was: "Hey, man. Close enough."

CRIS: That doesn't sound very professional. They still in business?

ALEX: No. One of the partners took all the money and went to South America. We should have suspected something. All of his personal checks had pictures of Argentina.

CRIS: Our cause is very professional. Very well organized. We have a slogan and a song. Our slogan is: Take all the money away from the capitalists and return it to the common people so we can live happily ever after.

ALEX: That's a catchy slogan.

CRIS: Wanna hear our theme song?

ALEX: Not right at this time.

CRIS: Do you have a slogan?

ALEX: Oh, sure.

CRIS: What is it?

ALEX: "No."

CRIS: That's it? That's the slogan? "No?"

ALEX: Yes.

CRIS: That's not an acceptable slogan. It doesn't convey any meaning. It doesn't ... capture ... the essence of your position.

ALEX: We found it fits every situation and people seem to remember it.

CRIS: Hey. Why don't you come with me next weekend. I'll show you some great slogans and you can copy one for your cause. It's a nationwide protest. We all go to the nearest big city and we take tents ... and cookout ... and sing protest songs.

ALEX: Sounds like a Boy Scout camping trip.

CRIS: It's big. Really big. We can feel the excitement and the unity of a nation demanding change. By the way, I forgot to ask. What are you protesting?

ALEX: I don't know.

CRIS: (*stands*) What? You don't know?

ALEX: Nope. I work for a firm and we protest things. Someone hires us and we protest whatever they want. I forget what it is today.

CRIS: You mean you sell your soul to the highest bidder?

ALEX: No. I sell my pole to the highest bidder.

CRIS: Huh?

ALEX: That's my pole (*points to sign*) We each have our own pole and we just change the sign at the top.

CRIS: You mean to tell me that you are protesting something and don't care? You have no feeling for an issue?

ALEX: Oh, I have feelings. For example, I feel for your cause because I've learned a lot about business. My first lesson was not to believe the old business adages.

CRIS: Like what?

ALEX: 'If at first you don't succeed, try, try again.' See... if you keep trying and keep trying, all you do is draw attention to the fact that you can't come up with the answer. My new saying is, 'If at first you don't succeed, deny that you were even trying.'

CRIS: Hey, that's pretty good. We could write our own book of business truths. For example, I was told, 'Don't be afraid to disagree with your boss.' Ha! My boss believed in fireside chats. If you didn't take his side in the chat, you were fired.

ALEX: Or, 'Every cloud has a silver lining.' The correct way to look at that is, 'Every silver lining is surrounded by a really ... big ... cloud.' (*Alex stretches out on the bench.*)

CRIS: Hey, what are you doing? You're supposed to be protesting ... something ... not taking a nap.

ALEX: I'm organizing my strength. That sign is pretty heavy to carry around.

CRIS: You can't convince people to believe in your cause if you're lying down. Look at me. (*He looks at imaginary cars going by.*) "Go! Go! Big business must go!" See? Show some enthusiasm for your cause.

ALEX: Let me ask you something. If you do convince someone of your cause, so what?

CRIS: (*returns to the bench and Alex has to sit up*) So what? So what? I'll tell you what. If we convince enough people then big business will cease to exist.

And the power will be returned to the people.

ALEX: What will happen to all the jobs that are lost?

CRIS: The wealth will be distributed because the people will start more businesses.

ALEX: So all you've done is create more bosses.

CRIS: (*thinks about it for a moment*) So, you don't agree with the rest of the world? Everyone in the world knows that corporations are controlling our lives. You don't think I'm right?

ALEX: Even a broken clock is right twice a day. But, hey ... I'm not looking for an argument here. I agree with you, I think. Wait. I'll show you. Give me your sign. (Alex grabs the sign and waves it at passing cars and yells very casually) "Hey! Tear down big business ... if you're not busy today."

CRIS: Give me that sign. You can't excite people to your cause like that. Here, I'll show you. (*Cris jumps up and down wildly and waves his sign.*) "Get rid of corporate greed and get rid of it NOW! Dismantle the machinery that enslaves America!" (*Cris settles down but is still intense.*) Sometimes I get to talk with people face to face. I tell them to look across the fence at the big banks and the corporate palaces. See there? The grass is greener. They have grass growing and it is greener.

ALEX: (*quietly*) The grass may be greener but it still has to be mowed.

CRIS: What does that mean?

ALEX: I don't know. It just slipped out. Hey, you know ... employers aren't all bad. I had a couple of bosses that I liked. I learned some things from them. One

boss told me, "A fool and his money are soon audited." Pretty good, huh?

CRIS: (*has calmed*) That would be funny if the big auditing firms weren't in cahoots with the big companies. One lies and the other testifies for them. But ... I still can't get over that you are in a protest and you don't know why.

ALEX: Oh, I know why. It's money. I get paid.

CRIS: That is so ... shallow.

ALEX: I know.

CRIS: If people knew that you got paid and don't care about your cause, they would not like it, not one itty-bit. I'm confident about that.

ALEX: Confidence is what you have ... right before you understand the situation. My current boss told me that one. (*laughs*) Hey. I won a contest at

the office. The boss offered \$100 to the person who came up with the best money saving idea. I won. I suggested they lower the prize money for the contest. *(stands)* Well, I guess I should get back to work. My 401k isn't big enough for me to retire just yet. *(to Chris)* You get paid for this gig?

CRIS: No. I do it out of motivation for the cause.

ALEX: Oh. OK.

CRIS: And you get paid?

ALEX: Yep.

CRIS: And have a retirement plan?

ALEX: Yep.

CRIS: Do you have a business card? I may give you a call.

ALEX: Sure thing. *(hands business card)*

*(They pick up their signs and return to their respective corners of the stage.)*

ALEX: *(waves placard)* Vote "No."

CRIS: *(waves placard and in a relaxed manner, says)* Help bring down big business ... if you're not too busy today.

*(At the end they both wave their signs.)*

*(Lights down and back up on Chuck)*

CHUCK: I, too, have protested. In fact, I've protested a lot. I protested when I was told I had to be in this play. I complained when I found I had to run away and join this circus. I objected loudly when I saw the script. As with most protests ... nothing changes, so here we are. Wanna hear a story? We have some storytellers on tap for you. We are bringing up the spotlight on Ring 6 for your edification and enjoyment. For this experience ... we go back to school.

#### Scene 6: The Storytellers

MISS MARKHAM: Good morning, boys and girls! This is the day we've all been waiting for! National Reading Day in Our Schools! Remember that I promised you we'd have some very, very special guests at our school today? Yes! I've invited three wonderful people from our community to tell you stories! Isn't that wonderful? You see, they will each tell you a fairy tale and I'd like to introduce them right now! First ... this is Ty-Anne Matthews, a first grader at our own elementary school! Take a bow, Ty-Anne! *(Ty-Anne shyly comes forward and bows, thumb in her mouth.)* Thumb out of your mouth, dear. And this is Bruno Greasragi, the man who changes people's oil down at the truck stop. Bruno?

BRUNO: *(taking a step forward and bowing)* Yo.

MISS MARKHAM: And finally, Regina Queensley, the owner of the British Bed, Breakfast and Bagels Tea Shop. Miss Queensley?

REGINA: *(a step forward, formally, and with a British accent)* Charmed, I'm sure.

MISS MARKHAM: So, storytellers? What stories did you prepare to tell us today?

TY-ANNE: I'm gonna do Goldilocks and the Three Bears.

MISS MARKHAM: Wonderful!

BRUNO: Uh ...

MISS MARKHAM: Yes, Bruno?

BRUNO: Dat's da one I was gonna do.

MISS MARKHAM: Oh, my.

REGINA: Pardon me, but I'm an expert on that story and I've been practicing it for weeks.

MISS MARKHAM: You all planned to tell about Goldilocks and the Three Bears?

TY-ANNE: Uh-huh.

BRUNO: Yo.

REGINA: Most assuredly.

MISS MARKHAM: Oh, my. We seem to have a problem. You all planned to tell the same story.

REGINA: It's simple. You two will have to change stories.

TY-ANNE: It's the only one I know.

BRUNO: Me too.

MISS MARKHAM: Dear me. I think we have a problem. Look ... I know ... perhaps if each of you could perform just a bit of the story? Could we do that? ... Please.

TY-ANNE: It's the only one I know.

BRUNO: Me too.

REGINA: How dreadful. I suppose so.

MISS MARKHAM: Good! Let's begin! Now pay attention, boys and girls! Ty-Anne, would you like to begin?

TY-ANNE: (*in her stumbling way with much fidgeting*) Well okay. There was like three bears, you know ... and they were hairy and stuff ... and they had stuff runnin' from their noses and ...

MISS MARKHAM: Uh ... Bruno! Perhaps you'd like to take over.

BRUNO: Where'd she leave off?

REGINA: ... runny noses.

BRUNO: Oh. Well, dese bears was really, really big ... and they didn't have good 9-5 jobs. Dey just sorta cruised around da forest waitin' for some chick to ...

MISS MARKHAM: Uh! ... Regina? If you'd like to continue?

REGINA: I'll try. Let's get right to Goldilocks, shall we? The girl was rather lower class, but had aspirations to make something of herself in society, so she finished charm school and went on a walk in the woods. She wore a smart three-piece, tailored suit by Armani and ...

MISS MARKHAM: Uh ... Ty-Anne?

REGINA: What's wrong?

MISS MARKHAM: Nothing! Nothing! I just thought Ty-Anne might be done talking about nasal congestion. Ty-Anne?

TY-ANNE: And the bears' noses was runnin' so bad that it was drippin' down in their fur and gettin' in their porridge and ...

MISS MARKHAM: Wait! Wait! Bruno? If you'd like to take over?

BRUNO: Sure thing. So dis Goldi chick was cruisin' da forest in a Chevy Suburban, 4-wheel drive and dual overhead cams and she ran smack into dis cabin full of bears. I mean "Whack!" But da bears weren't home. (*looking at Ty-Anne*) Dey was out gettin' sinus medicine. ... and ...

MISS MARKHAM: Uh ... Regina?

REGINA: Well, the crash completely ruined her Louis Vuitton blue shoes and I mean the girl was just a wreck! There she was, miles from a good manicure or health spa, and she chipped one of her fingernails when ...

MISS MARKHAM: Wait! Wait! Ty-Anne?

TY-ANNE: I'm lost. Where are we?

REGINA: Bruno's on the grease rack, I'm at the Gap, and your bears are messing up the furniture.

TY-ANNE: Oh.

MISS MARKHAM: Go on, Ty-Anne.

TY-ANNE: So these bears was really fuzzy and stuff, you know? But they was nice bears, you know? And so, you know ...

MISS MARKHAM: Yes, we know. Bruno.

BRUNO: So Goldi got an estimate of like two thousand bucks for the crushed fenders and another five hundred for gettin' the bear droppings off the rear ...

MISS MARKHAM: Wait! Wait! Perhaps you'd like to continue, Regina?

REGINA: I'd be charmed, thank you. So Miss Locks stepped out of her wrecked Suburban and knocked on the door. I mean these bears were crude. They had no maid, no doorman ... nothing! So the girl went inside looking for some tea and crumpets.

MISS MARKHAM: Thank you. Ty-Anne?

TY-ANNE: Bears don't play trumpets.

MISS MARKHAM: Bruno!

BRUNO: It was really cool, you know. Dis place was laid out for a king. Da bears had Nachos and dip and satellite TV. Five whole channels of ESPN. So dis Goldi chick turned on the wide-screen TV and da Bears were playin' da Eagles! Cool! She plopped on the couch, grabbed a cold one and sat back to ...

MISS MARKHAM: Hold it! Hold it! I think we may be getting away from the original story. Regina, if you'd like to sort of lead us back on the right path.

BRUNO: You got somethin' against football?

MISS MARKHAM: No! No! Heavens, no! I just thought Regina might like to take over.

REGINA: She turned on the telly and it was the London Symphony playing Beethoven's Ninth Symphony! Well, she was delighted! She immediately phoned up a few close chums and ordered caviar!

MISS MARKHAM: Really? Ty-Anne, can you follow this?

TY-ANNE: I like puppies.

MISS MARKHAM: *(they all stare at Ty-Anne a moment, then Markham continues)* Uh ... Bruno?

BRUNO: Me, too. I like puppies, too.

MISS MARKHAM: There ... there aren't any puppies in the story of Goldilocks and the Three Bears.

TY-ANNE: You killed the puppies?

MISS MARKHAM: I didn't touch the puppies!

BRUNO: *(moving close to Miss Markham)* You touch those puppies and Bruno's gonna get mad.

MISS MARKHAM: Please! Please! If we could just get back to the story. Boys and girls, the three bears came home to find Goldilocks in their cabin and ... Uh ... Can one of you take it from here?

REGINA: They played croquet!

MISS MARKHAM: What?

REGINA: Oh, it was simply lovely! They spread a delightful tea service out onto the lawn and started knocking their croquet balls back and forth through the forest! It was all covered on the BBC!

BRUNO: BBC. She can't even spell.

TY-ANNE: Did they have puppies?

MISS MARKHAM: Wait! Wait a minute, please! We're getting all mixed up.

BRUNO: Me, too.

MISS MARKHAM: So the papa bear looked at the porridge and the broken bed and said ...? *(looking at Bruno)*

BRUNO: Hey! Somebody's got Nachos all over my bed!

MISS MARKHAM: Oh, no. *(looking at Regina)* And the Mama bear said ...?

REGINA: Well, I mean, what could she say? She wasn't dressed for the occasion and they had a seven p.m. dinner date with Snow White and the Prince, and ...

MISS MARKHAM: Oh, my. *(looking at Ty-Anne)* And the baby bear said ...?

TY-ANNE: Who stole my stinkin' puppies?!!

MISS MARKHAM: Boys and girls, as you can see, there are many ways to tell a story. Look, maybe if we could just get to the ending. Uh ... Who'd like to start?

REGINA: Me, obviously. At least I actually know the story. Well, housing prices being what they were, Goldilocks purchased a delightful little condo right down the road in Fairy Tale Acres, right next to that exquisite little

bungalow of Miss Muffet ... the girl who won best tuffet at the Westminster Tuffet Exposition last spring.

MISS MARKHAM: Uh ... I don't remember ... Ty-Anne?

TY-ANNE: What?

MISS MARKHAM: Finish the story

TY-ANNE: What story? They said I'd get cookies if I did this. You got the cookies?

MISS MARKHAM: Oh, dear. Bruno?

BRUNO: I ain't got her cookies.

MISS MARKHAM: I mean, would you like to finish the story?

BRUNO: I'm lost.

MISS MARKHAM: Goldilocks.

BRUNO: Oh. Why? Somethin' happen to her?

TY-ANNE: Where's my cookies?

REGINA: Your puppies ate them.

TY-ANNE: What!!!

BRUNO: No way!

MISS MARKHAM: Please! Please! If we could just finish the story! You know, the happily-ever-after part.

TY-ANNE: If I don't get my cookies then I ain't happy.

BRUNO: We about done? I got a grease job at one o'clock.

MISS MARKHAM: Uh ... Look ... Goldilocks went to live with the three bears and they lived ...

REGINA: Disgusting!

MISS MARKHAM: What?

REGINA: That's awful! In the same house? My bridge club would never approve.

TY-ANNE: *(going to an audience member)* You got any cookies?

MISS MARKHAM: Please! If we could just focus, people!

BRUNO: Okay...let's wrap dis up. Dis Goldi chick loads up da bears in da back of her Suburban, tosses in a few Nachos and dip, da big screen TV, da puppies and cookies and croquet mallets and heads to Daytona for da races. Dey stop off at Denny's for da all-you-can eat crumpet breakfast, den head for Disney World where everybody always lives happily ever after.

MISS MARKHAM: *(stares at him a moment, then)* Is that all?

BRUNO: Amen?

MISS MARKHAM: Boys and girls, this community reading event was to take place every month, but I think we've heard enough to last us the entire year. *(listens)* What? You want to have them back? Every month? Every week? Every ... No! No!

REGINA: Take it easy, dear ...

MISS MARKHAM: I'm not doing this again! I refuse! I quit!

REGINA: *(taking Markham by the arm and leading her off)* There, there, my friend.

TY-ANNE: (*talking to an audience member*) You look awful big for a fifth-grader. You flunk?

BRUNO: Hey kids ... since your teacher is not feelin' too good, let me tell you about the Hydraulic Jack and the Beanstalk. You see dere was dis mechanic who raised bears in his back yard ...

(*Lights down and back up on Chuck*)

CHUCK: It makes you wonder if any of the storytellers are as smart as the fifth graders. Teaching elementary school is tough but I think the toughest of the tough is kindergarten. It's like watching a nest of baby squirrels. Something is always moving. We're going to move the spotlight to Ring 7 and have a look at the first day of kindergarten ... from a unique perspective.

(*Lights down and back up on a kindergarten school room*)

Scene 7: Misfits

MONIQUE: (*entering, holding Kitty's hand*) This it?

KITTY: They said, "all the way down the hall, then turn at the water fountain."

MONIQUE: I didn't see the water fountain.

KITTY: Me either. But I had my eyes closed.

MONIQUE: Me, too.

KITTY: Wanna open 'em?

MONIQUE: I'm scared.

KITTY: Me too. Can you go through a whole year of kindergarten with your eyes closed?

MONIQUE: I don't think so.

KITTY: Why not?

MONIQUE: You bump into stuff.

KITTY: Okay ... on three let's open our eyes. One ... two ... three! (*both girls open their eyes*) Oh, no!

MONIQUE: What?

KITTY: Other people. Mommy didn't say there'd be other people in kindergarten. I thought I had it all to myself.

MONIQUE: Maybe they're just visiting.

KITTY: They have backpacks ... just like us ... and gym shoes ... just like us.

MONIQUE: And they look stupid and confused.

KITTY: Just like us. Let's go home.

MONIQUE: We can't. You can't quit kindergarten. It's like a law. You gotta go, Kitty.



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