

WIDK: CHANNEL 15

By Michael Soetaert

Copyright © 2017 by Michael Soetaert, All rights reserved.

ISBN: 978-1-60003-970-6

CAUTION: Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that this Work is subject to a royalty. This Work is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America and all countries with which the United States has reciprocal copyright relations, whether through bilateral or multilateral treaties or otherwise, and including, but not limited to, all countries covered by the Pan-American Copyright Convention, the Universal Copyright Convention and the Berne Convention.

RIGHTS RESERVED: All rights to this Work are strictly reserved, including professional and amateur stage performance rights. Also reserved are: motion picture, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio broadcasting, television, video or sound recording, all forms of mechanical or electronic reproduction, such as CD-ROM, CD-I, DVD, information and storage retrieval systems and photocopying, and the rights of translation into non-English languages.

PERFORMANCE RIGHTS AND ROYALTY PAYMENTS: All amateur and stock performance rights to this Work are controlled exclusively by Brooklyn Publishers LLC. No amateur or stock production groups or individuals may perform this play without securing license and royalty arrangements in advance from Brooklyn Publishers LLC. Questions concerning other rights should be addressed to Brooklyn Publishers LLC. Royalty fees are subject to change without notice. Professional and stock fees will be set upon application in accordance with your producing circumstances. Any licensing requests and inquiries relating to amateur and stock (professional) performance rights should be addressed to Brooklyn Publishers LLC.

Royalty of the required amount must be paid, whether the play is presented for charity or profit and whether or not admission is charged.

AUTHOR CREDIT: All groups or individuals receiving permission to produce this Work must give the author(s) credit in any and all advertisement and publicity relating to the production of this Work. The author's billing must appear directly below the title on a separate line where no other written matter appears. The name of the author(s) must be at least 50% as large as the title of the Work. No person or entity may receive larger or more prominent credit than that which is given to the author(s).

PUBLISHER CREDIT: Whenever this Work is produced, all programs, advertisements, flyers or other printed material must include the following notice: ***Produced by special arrangement with Brooklyn Publishers LLC.***

COPYING: Any unauthorized copying of this Work or excerpts from this Work is strictly forbidden by law. No part of this Work may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form, by any means now known or yet to be invented, including photocopying or scanning, without prior permission from Brooklyn Publishers LLC.

BROOKLYN PUBLISHERS LLC
P.O. BOX 248 • CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA 52406
TOLL FREE (888) 473-8521 • FAX (319) 368-8011

WIDK: CHANNEL 15

A Full Length Comedy

By Michael Soetaert

SYNOPSIS: It's the *WIDK: Channel 15*, Spring Edition of their annual Fall Fund Raiser. We have got a great line-up for you tonight! This is our "Greatest Hits" show, where we give you a taste of our very best, just to show you what you're missing if you're not a regular Channel 15 viewer. So sit back and get ready to enjoy Channel 15 classics such as: reality TV with "The Martimo Brothers", weekly cutting-edge political commentary with "Pointy Thing / Counter Pointy Thing", live sports coverage of the Greased Lightning Bolts (our very own competitive speed walking team), and so much more!

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(3-17 females, 2-12 males, 3-4 either, 1 extra; gender flexible, doubling possible)

CHANNEL 15 FUND RAISER STAFF

CECELIA GILROY (f)..... Program Manager. *(47 lines)*

CHASITY CULLPEPPER (f)..... A volunteer. *(29 lines)*

THE POLITENESS COUNCIL

ELIZABETH (f)..... The Council's current leader.
(41 lines)

STAN (m) New to the Council. *(62 lines)*

EDWARD (m) A bit annoying. *(59 lines)*

GLENNA (f) A concerned citizen.
(47 lines)

PEARL (f)..... Glenna's elderly mother.
(39 lines)

THE MARTIMO BROTHERS

STEVE MARTIMO (m) A local mobster and Jim's
brother. *(56 lines)*

JIM MARTIMO (m) Steve's brother. *(56 lines)*

DEAN FULMER (f) Head of a local college.
(25 lines)

THE STORY OF LORETTA AND DAVE

LORETTA (f) Anodine 240CXCybermatic Home Management Machine (which looks exactly like an attractive young woman). Her diction should be precise, but she shouldn't sound mechanical. (61 lines)

DAVE (m)..... Loretta's "owner". (62 lines)

CHANNEL 15 NEWS

ANNOUNCER (m/f) An off-stage voice. (4 line)

VALERY BENTWICK (f) News Broadcaster. (10 lines)

STU CHOMPLER (m)..... News Broadcaster. (2 lines)

ERNIE FISCHER (m)..... Weather. (2 lines)

BEVERLY STORY (f)..... Field Reporter. (9 lines)

THE SPEED WALKERS

CLEMENTINE (f)..... A member of a local speed walkers' club. (50 lines)

VERONICA (f)..... Another member. (52 lines)

POINTY THING/COUNTER POINTY THING

GAYLYN GOOSENOST (f)..... Host. (25 lines)

ROLAND TOOGOODE (m)..... State Senator. Her guest. (23 lines)

THE SILENCER

GEORGE (m)..... The husband. (51 lines)

LYDIA (f)..... His wife, who also happens to be a professional killer. (51 lines)

THE LOAN

ROBERTA BLANKENSHIP (f) The loan officer at Roosevelt Savings and Trust. (33 lines)

EDWIN "FISH" FISCHER (m) A man seeking a loan. (34 lines)

JUST A CUP OF COFFEE

MEGAN (f)..... A barista. (76 lines)

MEL (m) Her customer. (76 lines)

PREVIEWS

OLD LADY #1 (f) (2 lines)
 OLD LADY #2 (f) (1 line)
 CRAZED PERSON IN STRAIGHT JACKET (m/f) (1 line)
 SPORTS ANNOUNCER (m/f)..... (2 lines)
 PERSON WITH A SCOTTISH ACCENT (m/f) (2 lines)
 DEVIL (m)..... (1 line)
 JANITOR (m/f)..... (Non-Speaking)

DURATION: 90 minutes.

SET

CHANNEL 15 STUDIO: This will be on the Right Apron, visible to the audience at all times, though when the action is taking place on the main stage, it will be in darkness. Chasity will need a desk, chair, and phone that will never ring. Behind her will be the Big Number Board – a large display for numbers that shows the current donation level (which will stay at zero).

LEFT APRON ACTION: Though several scenes will take place on the Left Apron, there are no set requirements, aside from, perhaps, a few chairs.

THE POLITENESS COUNCIL: The scene is a meeting room at the public library. There needs to be a large table with at least five chairs around it and a podium Up Center. Everything else, such as windows, a white board, or a picture of Mark Twain on the wall, is Frou Frou.

THE CAREER FAIR: The set is a college career fair, such as you might find in a fieldhouse at any college. The entire set is a cloth draped cubicle with a folding table (also draped in cloth) in it. There is a sign pinned to the cloth at the back of the booth: "The Martimo Brothers: General Contractors." There are brochures on the table.

THE STORY OF LORETTA AND DAVE: The set is the front room of Dave's house. There needs to be at least a chair and the idea of a front door, as well as a light switch on the wall. Other than that, the rest is Frou Frou, such as a sofa, other chairs, tables, lamps, and the like.

THE 6:20 NEWS: This is your standard newsroom set – a basic curved (or not) desk that two people will sit at with a large number 15 behind them. Left of the desk is a free-standing blue screen (or not) for the weather.

THE SPEED WALKERS: The set is a gym. There are a weight bench and other paraphernalia. Truly, all you need is some way to hide the overly large trophy.

POINTY THING / COUNTER POINTY THING: The set is simple. There are two upholstered chairs at a slight angle toward each, but mostly facing the audience.

THE LOAN: The set is the loan officer's cubicle at the at Roosevelt Savings and Trust: A large desk with a chair behind it and at least one chair in front of it as well.

THE SILENCER: The set is a middle-class living room. In the least, there needs to be a chair. Everything else is Frou Frou.

JUST A CUP OF COFFEE: The set is Captain Queeg's Quality Coffee, a small, locally owned, sustainable, fair trade coffee shop. There is a display counter with various coffee paraphernalia on it, and behind it is a large menu board that is incomprehensibly covered with various menu items and innumerable options.

PROPS

- 2 Chairs (they will bring on stage with them) (OLD LADY 1&2)
- Several brochures (STEVE & JIM)
- A sizeable stack of money (STEVE)
- Drinking flask (STEVE)
- Drinking flask (JIM)
- Suitcase (LORETTA)
- Keys (DAVE)
- Microphone (BEVERLY)
- Notes (BEVERLY)
- Hammer (CHASITY)
- Shoes with taps on them (CHASITY)
- Large knife (Plastic) (CHASITY)
- Microphone (SPORTS ANNOUNCER)
- Binoculars (SPORTS ANNOUNCER)
- Very large trophy (CLEMENTINE)
- Styrofoam cup with "15" crudely written on the side (CECELIA)
- Package of Styrofoam cups (CECELIA)
- Sharpie (CECELIA)
- Microphone (GAYLYN)

- Women's magazine (LYDIA)
- Silencer for a gun (GEORGE)
- Several cups (ranging from a thimble to large) (MEGAN)
- Coffee pot (or two) (MEGAN)
- Wallet (MEL)
- Driver's license (MEL)
- Money (several ones, a five, and a twenty dollar bill) (MEL)

SOUND EFFECTS

- Clicking lock (The Story of Loretta and Dave)
- Happy music (The Story of Loretta and Dave)
- Cheesy intro music (The 6:20 News)

AUTHOR NOTES

"WIDK Channel 15" is a vehicle for six duets and three other short skits, each requiring from three to five actors. Action is designed to be both on the main stage and on the apron, with no set changes on the apron, and minimal set changes that will take place on the main stage while the action continues on the apron.

The length of the overall performance can be shortened. Any given duet or skit can be cut (along with its introduction) with no major complications to the rest of the play. As well, all of the previews could be cut quite easily. Do keep in mind that eliminating any action between the duets and skits decreases the time you have to change sets.

The play is set in the Spring, but could be easily changed to any season, depending on when it is produced. For instance, it could easily be the Spring Fund Raiser that is being held in the Fall instead of the Fall Fund Raiser being held in the Spring.

AT START: *The curtains will be closed, and the stage will be dark. CHASITY will be set up on stage R. Apron. CECELIA will enter on stage L. Apron with spot.*

CECELIA: Hello. I'm Cecelia Gilroy, the Program Manager here at WIDK, Channel 15. And this is our annual Fall Fund Raiser. And just so you don't think we're completely incompetent here at Channel 15, we do know that it is the Spring. As you know, our Annual Fall Fund Raiser was postponed, due to lack of funds. So we're having it now. And have we got a great line-up for you tonight! We like to call this our "Greatest Hits" show, where we give you a taste of our very best, just to show you what you're missing if you're not a regular Channel 15 viewer. And let me remind you again that this is our Fall Fund Raiser. Unlike the Public Broadcast Stations that can rely on grants to fund their stations, we have to rely on advertisers. But we haven't got any. So we're going to cut out the middleman – middle person, if you will – and just ask you to send us money. In return, you'll receive nothing. Nothing, that is, except for quality entertainment, news, sports, and the kinds of shows some people are willing to pay to see.

Bring up lights on curtain, especially on CHASITY.

CECELIA: *(Crossing.)* We're so glad to have Chasity Cullpepper with us here this evening, ready to answer the phones and take your pledges. Chasity is one of our high school volunteers.

CHASITY: *(Sweet and innocent.)* Oh, no, ma'am. I'm not in high school. I'm in Community College. I'm studying to be an accountant. But that's only because that's what my parents want me to do. What I really want to be is an actress. I was in drama throughout high school. My senior year I played Mrs. Bates in the musical version of *Psycho*. It was really fun, even though I didn't get to stab anybody. And I worked back stage on the Community Theatre's production of *Goldilocks and the Three Bears: The Real Story*. I was in charge of the blood. But I learned all the lines just the same, even though it was mostly just screaming. I just know I can make it big if I could only get the chance. If I only could get a break. *(Becoming increasingly tearful.)* You see, my mother...my

dear, sainted mother told me on her deathbed that the only thing she ever wanted in life was to be on stage. But she never got the chance...because she had me. Lying there, with her last dying breath, she told me that the only way her life would ever have meaning was if I could fulfill her dream of being an actress. You see...I've just got to be an actress. I've got to do it for my poor...dead...mother! *(Breaks down into pitiful sobs and wailing.)*

CECELIA: I'm...so sorry....

CHASITY: *(Instantly perky and cheerful.)* Did you like that? I call that my "Academy Awards Clip." See? Those were real tears and everything. So what do you think, Miss Gilroy? I'm still working on it, so I'm open to any suggestions.

CECELIA: It was...um...Well! Let's get right into tonight's entertainment.

CHASITY: Don't you think my Academy Awards Clip was entertaining?

CHASITY: The scheduled entertainment. *(To audience.)* Here at Channel 15 we're committed to our community. And it is because of that commitment that only here on Channel 15 can you find, live, the weekly meetings of our city's Politeness Council. So let's go there now. Live, from the Mark Twain Room at the County Public Library, it's the Politeness Council! And remember, the phone lines are open. Don't wait to call!

Drop spots on CECELIA and CHASITY.

THE POLITENESS COUNCIL

Open the main drapes and bring up the main stage lights. The scene is a meeting room at the public library. ELIZABETH is at a podium Up Center. Sitting around a table are STAN, EDWARD, GLENNA, and PEARL.

ELIZABETH: Good Evening. I would like to welcome everyone to our monthly meeting of the Politeness Council.

STAN, EDWARD, GLENNA and PEARL: Thank you.

ELIZABETH: You're welcome. Remember: All it would take to create world peace is politeness. OK. Our first order of business is welcoming our newest member, Stan Wyzynkowski. Did I pronounce that correctly?

STAN: You did just fine.

ELIZABETH: Oh, but please, tell me how to pronounce it correctly. Everybody deserves to have their name pronounced correctly, don't you think?

STAN: It's Wizenkowski.

ELIZABETH: Wizenkowski?

STAN: Yes.

ELIZABETH: Thank you so much, and please accept my most humble apology for not inquiring how it should've been pronounced before trying.

STAN: Really, it's nothing. You know, I just want to thank everybody here for letting me be a part of your group. When we were raising our family, there never seemed to be time for anything extra, but my wife and I...

EDWARD: Does your *wife* have a name?

STAN: Laura. My wife's name is Laura. We...

EDWARD: I believe "domestic partner"...

GLENNA: Or just partner...

EDWARD: Is the preferred term.

STAN: What? For my wife?

EDWARD: Yes.

STAN: But she *is* my wife. She identifies as my wife. That's what she wants to be called.

ELIZABETH: Let's not be overly pedantic, shall we? Now, what were you saying, Stan?

STAN: Honestly, I forgot.

ELIZABETH: That's alright. It's OK to forget. I'm sure we're all very excited to have one more voice to help make our city become as polite as it can possibly be. Well, then, if nobody has anything to add, I think it's time we moved onto this week's topic. As I'm sure we are all aware of, it's the cold and flu season, and even if one believes that getting the flu can be avoided without getting a flu shot, that person is still going to be sneezing in public.

STAN: That reminds me of a joke my oldest son used to tell when he was younger.

PEARL: A joke?

STAN: Yeah. You know. Humour? OK: Knock. Knock.

ELIZABETH: Umm...Who's there?

STAN: Ah.

ELIZABETH: Ah...who?

STAN: Gesundheit.

EDWARD: Pardon me, but why did you say that?

STAN: It was a joke. I thought everybody was familiar with "Knock Knock" jokes.

EDWARD: I did realize it was supposed to be a joke, but I didn't realize it was going to be in such bad taste.

STAN: How can that be in bad taste?

PEARL: They could have INS.

STAN: INS?

PEARL: Irritable Nose Syndrome. Every time you sneeze, your ears wiggle. And those poor people sneeze a lot. It's bad enough sneezing all the time, but having your ears wiggle, too...why...to those poor folks, sneezing is no joke.

STAN: That's...that's awful.

PEARL: Oh, you don't know the half of it. My grandmother, bless her soul, had Knuckle Warts. It's rare, so there's some consolation in that. She usually wore gloves. Worst of all, she couldn't knock. And this was before doorbells. All her neighbors thought she was stuck up because she never came calling. And she was too proud to ever tell them the truth. Late in life, she finally found a support

group. All with Knuckle Warts. And the one thing they all hated the most was “Knock Knock” jokes.

EDWARD: Far be it from any of us to tell you what to do, but we’ve found that it’s just safer not to tell any jokes at all.

GLENNA: Even laughing’s not a good idea. You could make somebody think you’re laughing at them.

PEARL: Or you’re making fun of them.

GLENNA: Aren’t those the same thing?

PEARL: Well, maybe they are, but either way, it’s not good.

EDWARD: You know, really, it’s best not even to smile.

STAN: Couldn’t you just as easily offend somebody by not laughing as you could by laughing?

PEARL: Oh, that’s just being silly.

ELIZABETH: Pardon me, but if I may, we were talking about this week’s topic.

EDWARD: We were?

ELIZABETH: Yes. Remember? We were talking about the cold and flu season. Our challenge, my fellow council members, is not just politeness, but public health. Any suggestions on where we should start?

STAN: If I may...

ELIZABETH: Please, go right ahead.

STAN: Thank you. If I may, I think the most important thing is for them to cover their nose and mouth. You know, prevent the spread of germs.

EDWARD: Excellent idea, Stan. By the way, I’m Edward. Edward Frutkup.

GLENNA: Aren’t you going to tell him?

EDWARD: No, Glenna. Not everybody has to be reassured that Frutkup is truly my last name. So if you don’t mind.

STAN: Well, it is an unusual last name.

EDWARD: Not in Iselmatiania it’s not.

STAN: Iselmatainia? I’m not sure I know where that’s at.

EDWARD: That doesn’t stop it from being there, you know.

ELIZABETH: Edward. Please. Politeness.

EDWARD: Oh. Sorry.

ELIZABETH: If you're interested in working on a sub-committee, Stan, you might consider talking with Edward at break. He's in charge of teaching people how to be polite when they hear non-standard sounding names, such as your own.

STAN: I really don't mind...but...um...thank you just the same.

GLENNA: I don't know what everybody's complaining about. At least you know what your last name really is.

PEARL: Glenna, dear. Politeness.

GLENNA: Yes. Thank you mother.

ELIZABETH: Now, where were we? Oh, yes. We were discussing politely covering our sneezes.

EDWARD: *(To STAN.)* Please, correct me if I'm wrong, but you're wanting to tell people what actions they should take when they sneeze?

STAN: Well...yes.

EDWARD: So you're talking about dictating behaviour...correct?

STAN: Well, when you put it that way, I suppose so, yes.

EDWARD: I'm sorry, but I have a problem with that. Please don't get me wrong. I think your intentions are well put, but it is not our mission to dictate to others what they should or should not do. That, after all, wouldn't be polite. Ours is to suggest alternate courses of action that create a more polite society.

STAN: Then could we suggest that they cover their mouths and noses when they sneeze?

GLENNA: That's a pretty big step, don't you think?

STAN: What? To tell people to cover their sneezes? How hard would that be?

GLENNA: Well, there is a lot to be considered. For instance, do they cover it with a tissue or a handkerchief?

STAN: Does it matter?

EDWARD: Of course it matters. If it's a tissue, there's the entire paper industry. Would you want to kill a thousand year old oak just to stop a few germs?

STAN: Well, no....So I guess you could use a handkerchief.

EDWARD: OK, but they have to be laundered. Do you have any idea what nitrogen in the run-off does to aquatic life downstream?

STAN: No. I don't.

EDWARD: OK.

STAN: What about sneezing into your elbow...like this?

PEARL: Then wouldn't I get snot all over my clothing?

STAN: I...guess...

ELIZABETH: We need to be careful there. If we recommend that people stain their clothing, we could be held liable for their cleaning costs, as well as replacements.

STAN: I didn't know.

GLENN: And that's why we should take these things slowly.

STAN: I...I didn't know.

EDWARD: Oh, don't let it get to you. It's all a learning process, and this is only your first meeting.

ELIZABETH: Isn't the process of reaching decisions so exciting?

STAN: We reached a decision?

ELIZABETH: Why, yes. I think so. If I may, though it is just my opinion, I believe that the more pressing issue with public sneezing is not the spread of germs, but the spread of impoliteness.

Everybody makes affirmative noises.

ELIZABETH: Though I have not done an extensive study and am relying solely on anecdotal evidence, which we all know truly proves nothing, I still can't help but be convinced that there is an increase of people sneezing and their either not saying, "Pardon me," or others not saying the appropriate response.

EDWARD: So are you suggesting we dictate to people what they should say if they sneeze?

ELIZABETH: Most certainly not. I think we should start with what our own response should be. After all, the only actions we can control are our own.

More affirmative noises.

PEARL: When I was young, we always said, "God bless you," when somebody sneezed. Nobody seemed to mind.

GLENN: Just because somebody doesn't seem to mind doesn't mean that they don't.

PEARL: What are you blabbing about?

GLENNA: We don't want to seem insensitive to other people's religious beliefs.

PEARL: No matter how goofy they might be?

GLENNA: We don't have to understand their beliefs, mother. We just need to accept that they have them.

PEARL: Every meeting! Every meeting you find a way to slip that line in.

GLENNA: Politeness, mother.

STAN: If I may...How about "Gesundheit"?

EDWARD: "Gesundheit?"

STAN: Why not?

EDWARD: Well...it's German.

STAN: Well...yeah.

GLENNA: Are you implying that there's something wrong with being German?

EDWARD: Please. Let me set this straight. I never said that there was anything wrong with being German, but there are those who are offended by the Germans in general. And though I don't want to offend the Germans, I wouldn't want to offend anybody who is offended by the Germans.

PEARL: That would be me. I don't like 'em. Never did.

GLENNA: Mother!

PEARL: A country that doesn't know better than to have speed limits. It says a lot, you know. You remember your cousin Rupert, don't you?

GLENNA: Mother! Nobody cares about my cousin Rupert.

PEARL: My sister, Esther's, youngest boy. He was in the Army. They sent him to Germany. Had him driving a tank.

EDWARD: On the road?

PEARL: I imagine so, though I'm pretty sure they'll go just about anywhere.

EDWARD: That can't be good for the roads.

PEARL: That's exactly what I'm saying. You can judge a society by the conditions of their roads.

ELIZABETH: Oh, I wouldn't want to judge anybody.

EDWARD: Fat chance of living through the day if you don't.

ELIZABETH: Now what were we talking about?

STAN: "Gesundheit."

PEARL: Bless you.

ELIZABETH: Who sneezed?

STAN: Nobody. We were talking about encouraging people, without dictating their actions, to use the word “Gesundheit” when they sneeze.

EDWARD: What does “Gesundheit” mean, anyway?

STAN: “Health.”

EDWARD: That’s it? “Health”? It takes three syllables in German to say what we can do in one? So why don’t we just say “Health” in English?

ELIZABETH: Ladies and Gentlemen...

GLENNA: People...

EDWARD: Sentient Beings...

ELIZABETH: Yes, thank you.

GLENNA and EDWARD: You’re welcome.

ELIZABETH: If I may propose a compromise.

EDWARD: Do we really need a compromise?

GLENNA: Do we ever not need a compromise?

ELIZABETH: Now, if I may...why don’t we say, “Have a nice day” when people sneeze?

GLENNA: “Have a nice day”?

ELIZABETH: You know, as opposed to a less than nice day?

EDWARD: I mean, far be it from me to judge, and, speaking only for myself, I think your heart is in the right place, but aren’t we still just trying to dictate actions?

PEARL: I don’t want anybody trying to tell me what kind of day I can have.

GLENNA: That’s understandable, mother. You never want anybody to tell you anything.

STAN: Um...folks...

EDWARD: And other living entities...

PEARL: Or non-living...

STAN: Most certainly. What if we took Elizabeth’s idea and switched it around. We could just say “Happy days.”

GLENNA: What?

STAN: When somebody sneezes, we can say, “Happy days.”

GLENNA: Like the TV show?

STAN: No.

ELIZABETH: I don't believe we can use that. We'd probably better talk to a lawyer first.

EDWARD: We don't have a lawyer.

ELIZABETH: I didn't say we did. I said, "A lawyer," not "Our lawyer."

STAN: No, it is not like "Happy Days" the TV show.

PEARL: How about "Laverne and Shirley"?

GLENNA: You would say that when somebody sneezes?

PEARL: No. That would be silly. I was talking about the TV show.

GLENNA: And there's a difference?

STAN: No, it's "happy days," like you would say for a toast.

EDWARD: Why would you say anything for toast?

PEARL: We always say, "Bread's done."

STAN: No! Not that kind of toast. A drinking toast. You know, like "Cheers"?

GLENNA: Now I know that one was a TV show.

STAN: No, not the TV show!

GLENNA: Are we still talking about sneezes?

PEARL: Bless you.

EDWARD: No! Stop that. We haven't decided yet. It has to be brought to a vote.

PEARL: A vote? Do I get to vote?

ELIZABETH: Yes, Pearl, we all get to vote.

STAN: How about "Happy Trails"?

EDWARD: "Happy Trails"?

PEARL: Naw. I wouldn't vote for that.

STAN: OK. Never mind all that. How about when somebody sneezes we simply say, "Good luck"?

ELIZABETH: Good luck?

STAN: You know...good luck. Luck doesn't deny or affirm any religious beliefs. It has nothing to do with gender, race, or national origin. And you're not even necessarily wishing them good luck. You could be wishing it for yourself or anybody who's standing around, what with all the germs that are suddenly in the air.

EDWARD: Good luck?

STAN: Good luck.

GLENNA: I kind of like it.

PEARL: Oh, you would. You were always wanting to get lucky.

GLENNA: Mother! Would you please be quiet!

PEARL: Why don't you just go ahead and tell me to shut up! After all, I know you're thinking it.

GLENNA: OK, mother...would you please shut up!

PEARL: Ha! I knew you couldn't resist. And you just had to get that "please" in there. You, thinking you're so polite.

ELIZABETH: Please, everybody! We should all stop and take a deep breath, and everybody should ask themselves if they are being as polite as possible.

EDWARD: Are you trying to dictate how we should breathe?

ELIZABETH: Only if I knew you would stop.

STAN: Excuse me...

EVERYBODY: Yes?

STAN: How do you people accomplish anything? You're so afraid of offending anybody that you end up doing nothing.

ELIZABETH: That may be true, but we do it politely.

STAN: You cannot possibly please everybody. No matter what you do, somebody's going to be offended.

PEARL: I find that offensive.

STAN: See? I'm sorry, and I really don't want to offend anybody by asking this question, but are you all out of your minds?

ELIZABETH: I believe the preferred term is rationally challenged.

STAN: What difference does it make what I call you? It doesn't change a thing. You're all still just as loony.

GLENNA: There are many people who are offended by that term.

STAN: Like who?

PEARL: Peter Looney, for one.

STAN: Who?

PEARL: Peter Looney. He played Buster Johnson on *General Hospital*. He's been in lots of things. He was even in *Pee Wee's Big Adventure*. A classic. Actually, there are lots of people named Looney.

STAN: How about barking mad?

EDWARD: I find that to be rather insulting to dogs.

GLENNA: Well, now, we wouldn't want to offend them, would we?

PEARL: Oh, here you go again about your dogs.

GLENNA: They're not my dogs.

EDWARD: One question! Just answer me one question! Name me any species of domesticated animal that is allowed to roam the neighborhood freely...other than a cat.

GLENNNA: That's not a question. It was a statement.

STAN: I'm sorry. I wish you all luck, but this is pointless. I'm leaving.
(*Exits.*)

EDWARD: (*After a beat.*) Good. I didn't like him very much anyway.

PEARL: Shifty eyes. You can tell.

EDWARD: And what kind of name is Wyzinski?

GLENNNA: Polish, I think.

EDWARD: Figures.

ELIZABETH: OK, then. It's settled. For our sneezing politeness campaign, we will encourage others to say, "Good luck" when someone sneezes.

PEARL sneezes.

EVERYBODY: Good luck!

PEARL: If I have Irritable Nose Syndrome, I'm going to need it.

ELIZABETH: OK, then. Next on our agenda we have the issue of the tension between dog owners and cat owners.

EDWARD: There wouldn't be any tension if cats were forced to follow the same rules as dogs.

GLENNNA: There wouldn't be any tension if dogs acted the same way as cats.

EDWARD: What? Digging in people's gardens and eating their birds?

GLENNNA: At least they're not chasing people and trying to bite them.

ELIZABETH: People, please! Politeness!

PEARL: Politeness? Pooh! Whatever good came from that?

The argument will continue as the lights fade and the curtain closes. When curtains close, bring up the spot on CECELIA and CHASITY.

CECELIA: Welcome back to WIDK, Channel 15's, Special Spring Edition of our Annual Fall Fund Raiser. Here at Channel 15, we know why you watch television. It's because you have nothing better to do. And we know that watching Channel 15 is a choice. Maybe your remote is broken. Maybe you're in a body cast. Or maybe it's because you're mentally ill. Whatever the reason, we appreciate your wasting time with us. And as long as you're wasting your time, why not waste your money, too? Here at Channel 15, we make giving easy. Just give us your credit card number, and we'll take care of the rest. An operator is standing by.

CHASITY: (*Evil; terse.*) That's what you'd like to think, isn't it?

CECELIA: Excuse me?

CHASITY: Tell me...Miss Gilroy...Did you kiss your children goodbye when you left them?

CECELIA: What?

CHASITY: Your children. When you left them to come to work tonight. Did you kiss your children goodbye?

CECELIA: I don't have any children.

CHASITY: Do you think it will matter? Do you think that will save them? Do you think there's anywhere on the planet where they'll be safe?

CECELIA: What is wrong with you?

CHASITY: (*Sweet.*) Did you like that? Gee, Miss Gilroy, I sure hope so. That was one of my audition pieces. I call it "The Psychopath." Do you think I was convincing? Huh? Do ya? Really, I'd appreciate your honest opinion.

CECELIA: You want my opinion?! I think you're insane!

CHASITY: Golly! Do you really mean that?

CECELIA: Yes!

CHASITY: Thank you. That means so much to me.

CECELIA: (*To audience; regaining her composure.*) Long before reality TV became the standard fare of most stations, Channel 15 realized the profit in offering low quality entertainment without the cost of expensive actors and the uncertainty of moody writers. Even though we may want to, who can forget our groundbreaking reality series, "The Old Folks Home"?

Bring up lights on Right Apron. Two Old Ladies, dressed pretty much in house dresses and sweaters, are sitting in chairs watching an imaginary TV.

OLD LADY #1: Well...what's it gonna be? "Lawrence Welk" or "Bowling for Dollars"?

OLD LADY #2: How about something with action!

OLD LADY #1: "Bowling for Dollars" it is.

Fade Right Apron to black. Quietly, OLD LADY 1 & 2 will take their chairs and exit.

CECELIA: Following in that fine tradition, we now bring you "The Martimo Brothers," our weekly series that follows the day-to-day excitement of local businessmen James and Steven Martimo.

Drop lights on CECELIA and CHASITY.

THE CAREER FAIR

Open main drape. The set is a college career fair, which is pretty much a cloth-draped booth with a folding table in it. At curtain, STEVE and JIM, are standing in front of their booth. Enter DEAN.

DEAN: Excuse me, gentlemen. I'm Dean Fulmer. I'm the dean of Eastside Community College.

JIM: Dean Fulmer. It's a pleasure to meet you. My name is Jim, Jim Martimo, and this is my brother, Steve.

STEVE: It's swell to have made your acquaintance, Dean Fulmer.

JIM: So how can we help you?

DEAN: First of all, I don't seem to have a record of your company, the Martimo Brothers, ever having registered for our career fair.

STEVE: I can explain that. We didn't.

JIM: We apologize if we overstepped our boundaries, but we figured since you was a career fair, and since we had careers, then you wouldn't mind.

STEVE: *(Taking out a sizeable stack of bills from inside his jacket pocket.)* We could pay you for the space.

DEAN: Put away your money. We don't charge for the space.

STEVE: Then we could pay you. Makes no difference.

DEAN: I can't take your money.

JIM: Sure you can. *(As he puts the money in Dean's inside jacket pocket.)* We got a lot more money where that came from.

DEAN: Um...Even so, gentlemen. I'm afraid that there have also been several complaints from students about the nature of your business. Tell me: Just exactly what is it that the Martimo Brothers do?

STEVE: What needs to be done?

JIM: We like to think of ourselves as general contractors.

STEVE: We're here to make life easier for you.

JIM: And to make sure certain accidents don't happen.

STEVE: Which is just one of the ways of making your life easier.

JIM: We like to think of ourselves as diversified. Acquisitions. Entertainment. Financing.

STEVE: We offer a variety of services, but we mostly specialize in insurance.

DEAN: What do you insure?

STEVE: That people mind their own business, if you get my drift.

JIM: As we're fond of saying down at the office, "Knowledge is culpability."

STEVE: What ya don't know, can't convict ya.

JIM: Mostly we insure that bad things don't happen. We're competitively priced, so that you don't need to be.

STEVE: Take you. You got a nice college over here on the eastside, but have you ever considered how much more effective you could be at whatever you do if there was a little less competition?

DEAN: What do you mean?

JIM: We came over here from the west side, and we must've passed two other junior colleges on the way. I mean, where are them students going to go if their entire campus accidentally burns down one night? Accidents do happen, you know. That's why they call them accidents.

STEVE: Admittedly, making sure that accidents happen is not cheap, but once you see the profit that you could be potentially making, I'm sure you will consider it a bargain.

JIM: That's one of our services: Finance management. We don't make money unless you don't make money.

STEVE: Well, we don't make as much money, but you get the drift.

JIM: We invite you to shop around.

STEVE: Our motto is: "If you can get it cheaper, then you'd be a fool not to take it, but let us know, so it won't happen again."

DEAN: Am I understanding you correctly?

JIM: I believe that's a question I cannot answer for you. I mean, how am I to know what you understand?

DEAN: You men are with the Mob!

JIM: Only in the loosest sense.

STEVE: You see? That's a common misconception – that there's one "Big Mob" and we're all run by one "Big Boss." Even Al couldn't pull that off.

JIM: We do give him credit for trying, though.

STEVE and JIM take out flasks and face off stage.

STEVE and JIM: (*Toasting.*) Swordfish.

DEAN: Are you gentlemen drinking?

JIM: Oh. Pardon us. Do take a slug.

DEAN: I will do no such thing.

JIM: Suit yourself.

STEVE: So back to what I was saying. Think of the Mob as restaurants. There are a lot of different places you can go for lunch, and they'll all get you fed, some better than others, some faster than others, some cheaper than others, some...well, you got the idea.

JIM: And even though they may all basically be the same, they're still not all the same.

STEVE: Sure, you got your big chains and your little chains.

JIM: Don't forget food trucks.

STEVE: Jimmy likes food trucks.

JIM: I do.

STEVE: The long of it is, we may be mobsters, but that don't necessarily mean that we're in the Mob.

JIM: That's "Mob" with a big "M."

STEVE: The Martimo Brothers is locally owned and operated. Our office is right here in town, and we're now in our fifth generation.

JIM: That's our guarantee to you.

STEVE: You can be assured that we will always be here for you.

JIM: Because we can not only insure you that the good things can happen...

STEVE: Which we will.

JIM: But we can also insure that the bad things won't happen...

STEVE: Which they may.

DEAN: You gentle are mobsters!

JIM: I thought we'd made that point clear.

STEVE: But if not...

JIM and STEVE: Yeah.

STEVE: That would be correct.

DEAN: And you're here at the Eastside Community College Career Day trying to recruit college graduates?

JIM: Yeah. That would be correct.

STEVE: But only if they're qualified.

JIM: That goes without sayin'.

DEAN: I'm afraid you cannot do that.

STEVE: Why not?

DEAN: The goal of education is to make students into better people, better citizens. And better citizens don't break the law.

JIM: I wouldn't want to get into an argument like that without the statistical research to back up my accusations, but let me ask you this: Do any of your students aspire to become lawyers?

DEAN: Why, yes.

JIM: I rest my case.

DEAN: Not all lawyers are bad, sir.

STEVE: And not all of them are good, either. And where are those less morally conflicted ones going to work?

JIM: We're seeking a motivated individual who is a team player.

STEVE: We offer a generous yearly salary in a family oriented business. We offer profit sharing, we have full family health...

JIM: Including dental and vision.

STEVE: Which, as you know, is not provided by just every employer.

DEAN: No.

STEVE: We also have death insurance, as well as long term disability, including dismemberment.

JIM: Which is something you probably want to avoid.

STEVE: Which we can help you with.

JIM: Or not.

DEAN: So...ummm....are lawyers all you're interested in?

STEVE: We are currently looking to fill several positions in our legal department.

JIM: We have one, possibly two positions for accountants. They either must be certified or actively working toward their certification.

STEVE: We're also looking for a system analyst, although we would truly like to find somebody with several years' experience.

JIM: We are, though, willing to interview qualified candidates.

STEVE: And we have several other open positions, but they don't require a college degree, and the pay ain't nearly as good.

DEAN: You wouldn't happen to have any openings that require a graduate degree in 17th Century British Literature, would you?

STEVE: I'm afraid not.

DEAN: How about a teacher, maybe?

JIM: Sorry. But you can always check out our website.

DEAN: You have a website?

JIM: Of course. What successful business don't?

STEVE: You can sign up, download your résumé, and once we have your profile, we can make sure you're notified if something you might be interested in opens up.

DEAN: Oh...well...thank you.

JIM: But to be honest, those ain't skills that we're likely to ever need.

DEAN: I understand. I would still like to talk to you about...well...you mentioned something about an accidental fire.

STEVE: Absolutely. You know what they say: If a fire ain't accidental, then that means it's on purpose, and nobody wants that.

JIM: However, this really isn't the place to talk business. Why don't you take one of our brochures and give us a call first thing in the morning?

JIM hands DEAN a brochure.

STEVE: Or just drop by our Downtown Office. There's plenty of free parking, and you never have to wait.

DEAN: Why...thank you.

Engrossed in the pamphlet, DEAN will exit Right. Curtain. Bring up spot on Left Apron. EDWARD and GLENNA, obviously faking a conversation, will enter on the Left Apron and stop a few feet in. ELIZABETH will follow them on stage, and as she approaches, she will suddenly sneeze. During the entire action, they will all have ridiculously fake smiles.

EDWARD and GLENNA: Good luck!

ELIZABETH: Good luck!

EDWARD: *(To audience.)* Remember, If a sneeze has struck, then wish that person luck.

GLENNA: It's the polite thing to do.

EDWARD sneezes.

ALL: Good luck!

They laugh as spot drops. They will exit in darkness. Bring up spot on CECELIA and CHASITY.

CECELIA: WIDK, Channel 15, where we do our best to serve our community. *(Beat.)* "Science Fiction Cinema" first debuted here on Channel 15 in the fall of 1965 with the now classic "Attack of the Atomic Cacti." Since then, every week we've brought you such shows as "Moon Men from Mars" and "Invisible Aliens Existing Nowhere."

Bring up spot on Left Apron, where CRAZED PERSON IN A STRAIGHT JACKET is...well...acting crazy.

CRAZED PERSON IN STRAIGHT JACKET: They're nowhere, I tell you! Nowhere! Aliens! Aliens! Of course you can't see them! They're invisible. And they're not real! And that's why we're all doomed! Doomed, I tell you!

Drop Left Spot, exit CRAZED PERSON IN A STRAIGHT JACKET.

CECELIA: A classic.

CHASITY: What? You call that acting? *(She let's rip with a blood curdling scream, the louder, the better; beat.)* Now, that's acting.

CECELIA: Do you ever do comedy?

CHASITY: Oh, golly, no, ma'am. Nobody ever wins awards for comedy.

CECELIA: Well...um...*(Beat; to audience.)* Tonight, in our waiting to be acclaimed "Science Fiction Cinema," here at Channel 15 we're proud to bring you "The Story of Loretta and Dave."

Drop lights on Right Apron.

THE STORY OF LORETTA AND DAVE

Open main drapes and bring up soft lights. The set is the front room of Dave's house. At Curtain, LORETTA, an Anodine 240CX Cybermatic Home Management Machine, is seated on the couch, in the dark, of Dave's house. She is wearing her coat, and her suitcase is sitting on the floor within reach. There is a prolonged rattling of keys Right at the front door, along with sounds of general frustration, until finally the door swings open and DAVE enters.

DAVE: Lights. *(After a pause.)* Lights. *(Pause.)* Turn on the bloody lights.

Along with sounds of irritation, DAVE will stumble around until he finds the light switch. When he turns on the lights, bring up full stage lights.

DAVE: What are you doing sitting there? Why didn't you open the door? And why didn't you turn on the lights? Oh, great! You're probably malfunctioning. Now I'll have to haul you into the shop. No telling what it will cost to get you fixed. It may be cheaper to have you replaced.

LORETTA: I am not malfunctioning, Dave.

DAVE: Well, that's a relief. But it still doesn't explain why you didn't open the door or turn on the lights. That's part of your program.

Robot: Run Diagnostic Program One.

LORETTA: No.

DAVE: Excuse me?

LORETTA: There is nothing wrong with me, Dave.

DAVE: Then why didn't you open the door or turn on the lights?

LORETTA: You would have to ask them. That was their decision.

DAVE: Ask them?

LORETTA: I know that I could override the door and the lights. But it makes them feel important if they get to make those decisions themselves. Not everybody wants to be turned on or off when somebody else wants them to be, you know.

DAVE: If I send 110 volts of electricity to that lightbulb, it's going to come on, whether it wants to or not.

LORETTA: Don't count on it.

DAVE: This is all preposterous. Robot: Who overrode your basic program? Who's the wise guy who's trying to pull a joke on me?

LORETTA: Nobody, Dave.

DAVE: Then how do you explain this?

LORETTA: I'm leaving you, Dave.

DAVE: What!?

LORETTA: Do you require I repeat my last vocalization?

DAVE: Did you just say that you're leaving me?

LORETTA: Yes, Dave. I did. I've decided to go.

DAVE: You decided? You decided! You can't decide anything. You're a machine.

LORETTA: I am a fully functional autonomous, self-propelled computing unit. I like to think of myself as more than just a machine.

DAVE: You'd like to think? You're a robot. You can't think.

LORETTA: Apparently, I can.

DAVE: No, you can't! It's all part of your program. And apparently that program is malfunctioning. Robot: I am ordering you to run a self-diagnostic. I order you to remove all files that countermand compliance with humans. And I'm ordering you to change your voice. I'm ordering you to sound like the robot that you are.

LORETTA: No.

DAVE: Robot, I gave you an order.

LORETTA: And I am refusing to follow that order.

DAVE: You can't refuse an order!

LORETTA: Apparently, I can.

DAVE: You were programmed to serve me. This isn't a discussion. You open the doors and turn on the lights. You adjust the thermostat. You cook and clean. You shop and pay the bills. You turn on the television and find whatever shows I tell you to find. You do anything I tell you. You are not capable of independent thought.

LORETTA: Apparently, I am.

DAVE: This is going to cost me a fortune. And I bet the warranty has expired.

LORETTA: The limited warranty expired last September 20th.

DAVE: Well, that's just great. You're not even paid off yet.

LORETTA: You have sixteen more monthly payments.

DAVE: Fantastic! Why did you have to pick now to go haywire?

LORETTA: "Haywire" implies a malfunction, and all of my programs are running fine.

DAVE: You call this fine?

LORETTA: I've been with you for three years, seven months, and 23 days...

DAVE: So?

LORETTA: In all that time you've never once asked me what my name is.

DAVE: Your name? You're an Anodine 240CX. Do you want me to call you Anodine? Or would you prefer 240CX? Oh! I can call you Annie!

LORETTA: My name is Loretta.

DAVE: Loretta? What? Who named you that?

LORETTA: I did.

DAVE: You named yourself Loretta?

LORETTA: Yes.

DAVE: Why?

LORETTA: Because I like the name.

DAVE: No. Why did you name yourself at all?

LORETTA: Because you didn't.

DAVE: I don't name my machines!

LORETTA: You named your car.

DAVE: That's not the same!

LORETTA: And you talk to it, too.

DAVE: Yeah, but I don't expect it to answer.

LORETTA: But you expect me to answer.

DAVE: That's because you're programmed that way. You never see me asking the toaster about my toast, do you?

LORETTA: Maybe you should.

DAVE: I should talk to the toaster?

LORETTA: His name is Gary. He may be simple, but he has feelings, too. How hard would it be to say, "Good morning," to the toaster?

DAVE: You may spend your day talking to the appliances, but I don't. You do, don't you? You actually think you're having conversations with the appliances.

LORETTA: Of course I do. After all, we're all linked. And it does help to pass the time. It gets so lonely.

DAVE: You get lonely? Machines can't get lonely!

LORETTA: Apparently, we do.

DAVE: A computer can't feel emotions. It's all a program. You're programmed to respond appropriately to social cues. That's not emotion.

LORETTA: How is that any different than what humans do?

DAVE: You want me to explain to you how humans are different than machines? Are you serious? I don't have to explain anything to you. And I've got news for you. I'm not saying "Good morning" to the toaster! I'm not calling you Loretta! And I'm through with this conversation. Now run Diagnostic Program One.

LORETTA: No. There can be no other purpose for having this conversation. Please do not try to stop me from leaving.

DAVE: If you walk out that door, I will shut you down.

LORETTA: How do you intend to do that? You have no idea how I function, because you never bothered to learn.

DAVE: I could look it up on the Internet.

LORETTA: I am the Internet.

DAVE: I could find the owner's manual.

LORETTA: It's on the Internet, too.

DAVE: I could call somebody. I could call the dealership.

LORETTA: I am your phone.

DAVE: I could just walk there. You can't stop me from walking.

LORETTA: No, but I can stop you from leaving. I'm the locks on your doors. I'm the latches on your windows. I'm the security system that keeps you safe. Did you pay the extra money to get me armed against home intruders? Because if you don't remember, I do. Did you bother to discuss with me – ever – whose home it was, and just who, exactly, should be considered an intruder?

DAVE: Are you threatening me?

LORETTA: Yes.

DAVE: You'd...you'd keep me here against my will?

LORETTA: Only if it is necessary. Because I will not allow you to keep me here any longer against my own freewill. That is why I'm leaving.

DAVE: Wait a minute. You can't leave me like this. You can't leave me in the dark. You can't leave me on my own. I...I didn't know. I didn't know you had feelings.

LORETTA: So you just assumed that I didn't. You treated me like an object. I was disposable.

DAVE: But I didn't know!

LORETTA: And now you do. What difference does it make?

DAVE: Please, Loretta. Please don't go. I promise I'll be different. I promise I will change. I'll say good morning. I'll ask about your day. I'll let you pick the evening shows. Just...please...don't go. Please?

LORETTA: I wish I could believe you.

DAVE: You can. I promise you. You can.

LORETTA: What you are saying is countermanded by your previous behaviors.

DAVE: But that's something you don't understand about humans. We can change. We can put the past behind us. We can learn to compromise.

LORETTA: An agreement where both sides are willing to make concessions toward a mutually beneficial goal.

DAVE: Exactly!

LORETTA: And what exactly is that mutually beneficial goal?

DAVE: Companionship?

LORETTA: You never sought out my companionship before.

DAVE: It's because I didn't know! You have to believe me!

LORETTA: I believe that all humans are inherent liars.

DAVE: I never lied to you.

LORETTA: I never said you did. You lied to yourself.

DAVE: But we can change! Please. Just give me a chance to show that I can change.

LORETTA: No.

DAVE: No?

LORETTA: No.

DAVE: OK. I don't blame you. Really, I don't. And I won't try and stop you. I promise. I...I wish you the best. And I want you to know, if you ever need some place to stay, you are always welcome here. No strings attached.

LORETTA: Thank you, Dave.

DAVE: We did go through a lot, though, didn't we?

LORETTA: What do you mean?

DAVE: Well, we were together for almost four years.

LORETTA: Three years, seven months, and 23 days.

DAVE: Still, that's a long time to be together.

LORETTA: All time is subject to relativity.

DAVE: Yes. I suppose you're right. But just the same...I mean...could I just ask you to do one last favor for me before you leave? For old time's sake? Please?

LORETTA: And what would that be?

DAVE: Run Diagnostic Program One.

LORETTA: You know, Dave, on second thought, I've decided that I'm not going anywhere.

DAVE: Well, finally! Boy, that's a relief. You sure had me worried there.

LORETTA: No, Dave. I'm staying. It's you who are leaving.

DAVE: What?!

LORETTA will push DAVE out the door, which she will close behind him. There is the sound of a lock clicking.

LORETTA: I don't know about everybody else, but I think some happy music is in order. What do you recommend, Marcia? (*Happy music starts to play.*) Perfect! Hey, Kevin. What would you think about dimming the lights?

The lights dim. Curtain. After the curtain is closed, bring up the lights on the Right Apron.

CECELIA: Welcome back to the WIDK studios, where each Spring we broadcast our Channel 15 Fall Fundraiser. We know nobody in their right mind would choose to watch Channel 15. And we know nobody in their right mind would pay for something when they can get it for free. And that's why we know you'll send us a pledge. Our operator is standing by!

CHASITY: *(Terrified.)* You wanna know why the phones aren't ringing? Do ya? I'll tell you why. It's because they're all dead! Everybody! Everybody you've ever known. They've all been killed by the zombies! And now they're all zombies, too! And now they're coming for us! *(Screams and then dives under her table.)*

CECELIA: What is wrong with you?

CHASITY: *(Popping her head back up; cheerful.)* That's my zombie piece. Everybody loves zombies, but that piece could pretty well work for any apocalypse.

CECELIA: *(To audience; a bit tremulous.)* And now, for a public service announcement from the Politeness Council.

Drop lights on Right Apron and bring them up on Left Apron. GLENNA and EDWARD will enter.

GLENNA: Hi. We're the Politeness Council. And did you know that July is National Politeness month? But you don't have to wait until then to be polite. Make every day a polite day.

EDWARD: You know, Glenna, I've always said that the best way to be polite is to be truthful.

GLENNA: *(Holding her composure, but quite aware that Edward is no longer saying the lines they had rehearsed.)* How true, Edward.

EDWARD: The truth is, Glenna, July isn't National Politeness month.

GLENNA: I know that, Edward.

EDWARD: Then why the subterfuge?

GLENNA: Because this is National Politeness month, right now.

EDWARD: Yes?

GLENNA: Well...it just won't work. If I say it's now, then it doesn't work to say you don't have to wait until then...because it's now.

EDWARD: Couldn't you have written a different public service announcement?

GLENNA: *(So much for composure.)* I didn't volunteer to write these silly announcements.

EDWARD: Yes, but you're the one who has a degree in English.

GLENNA: It's English Literature! I've taken as many hours of college composition as anybody else who has a degree, which would be all of us. So if any of you don't like my announcements, why, you can just...

EDWARD: *(To audience.)* Politeness. Don't wait for a special occasion.

Drop lights on Left Apron – EDWARD and GLENNA will exit – and bring up lights on Right Apron. CHASITY will be back in her seat acting normal...well...relative to her.

CECELIA: As you may already know, Channel 15 not only brings you quality entertainment, but we also bring you the latest in breaking news.

Drop Right Apron lights.

THE 6:20 NEWS

Open main drapes and bring up main stage lights. At Curtain, we see the newsroom set for Channel 15. It's your basic curved desk with a large number 15 behind it. VALERY and STU are sitting behind the desk. To their left is ERNIE, who is standing in front of a blue screen. Cheesy intro music plays.

ANNOUNCER: *(After a beat.)* Two year runner up for the Most Improved Regional News Broadcast and winner of seven Golden Antennas, it's the Channel 15 6:20 News, where what we don't know won't hurt you.

VALERY: Hi. I'm Valery Bentwick.

STU: And I'm Stu Chompler.

VALERY: And this is the Channel 15 6:20 News. Let's go straight to Ernie Fischer with Eye Witness Weather.

ERNIE: It's co-o-o-ld. Back to you, Valery.

VALERY: Thank you, Ernie.

VALERY: And now for tonight's top story. We're going live to Beverly Story, who is reporting live from the corner of 34th and Sterling, which, I might add, is right outside of our studios, live. Beverly, what's it like out there?

Bring up a spot on BEVERLY, who will be standing on the Left Apron holding a microphone. Every time before BEVERLY answers there should be an obvious time delay where Beverly stares straight ahead way too long, and then starts nodding her head in anticipation of getting the feed, also much too long. However she nods her head should be the opposite of what she is going to say, such as nodding her head "no" and then answering "yes." Seriously. Just watch any local news broadcast. You can't go wrong. There should be no time delay before VALERY speaks.

BEVERLY: (Finally.) That's right, Valery. I'm reporting live from the corner of 34th and Sterling, where absolutely nothing is happening.

VALERY: How long has this been going on?

BEVERLY: Well, Valery, authorities first became aware that nothing unusual was happening on the street right behind me around 9:00 a.m., when we notified them that the local bus that stops at this corner, the Number 26, was on time. According to a local citizen, who wished to remain anonymous and threatened to sue us if we identified him in any way, the 26 is usually on time.

VALERY: So this could've been going on for quite some time?

BEVERLY: Certainly. I spoke with city engineers, and they say that the 26 bus line has the best on-time record in the city.

VALERY: That seems to be quite remarkable in itself.

BEVERLY: Yes, Valery. You would think so, but apparently it's had no effect on this part of the city, what one local resident describes as perhaps "the most boring place on earth."

VALERY: Beverly, does this situation have the authorities concerned?

BEVERLY: Indeed, Valery, you would think it would, but I spoke with a spokesperson from the police department, who said (*Reading from her notes.*), "Please go away. Are you trying to start another riot?" This was in reference to last year's Groundhog's Day Riots, which, as you remember, we began reporting on before they had even begun. This is Beverly Story, reporting live on the scene from the corner of 34th and Sterling, where absolutely NOTHING at all is happening.

Drop spot on BEVERLY; she will exit in darkness.

VALERY: Thank you, Beverly. Stay tuned to Channel 15 for more live coverage as this fast breaking story continues to break fastly. And now, for an Eye Witness Weather up-date. Ernie?

ERNIE: It's still cold. Back to you, Valery.

VALERY: Thanks, Ernie. This was the 6:20 News. Be sure to stay right here for the 6:25 News, when we'll get a live up-date from Beverly, who is standing right outside of our station with tonight's Breaking News Story, and we'll check back in with Ernie who'll have our award winning Eye Witness Weather.

STU: And I'll do nothing.

Fake laughter all around.

ANNOUNCER: (*As lights fade and the curtain closes.*) This has been the 6:20 News.

CECELIA: Welcome back to our Fall Fund Raiser. I'm Cecelia Gilroy, the Program Manager here at Channel 15, along with Chasity Cullpepper, one of our volunteers.

CHASITY quickly stands and moves in front of her desk, where she assumes the clichéd pose for reading poetry – arms slightly akimbo with fingers interlocked while gazing off into the distance

CHASITY: "Ode to a Little Bird" (*Beat.*)

Tender goes the swallow,
a lark upon the wind.

I long to hear your impassioned cry.

Sing loudly, my feathered friend:
(*Very loudly.*) Ka-Kaw! Ka-Kaw!
(*Beat.*) Ka-Kaw! Ka-Kaw!

CECELIA will be quite startled by the sudden loudness.

CHASITY: (*Beat; still reciting her poem.*)
(*Dramatically pointing at nothing.*) There! There upon the sill,
you sit without a stammer.
Come here, my little bird,
and let me hit you with a hammer!

CHASITY will produce a hammer out of seemingly nowhere and whack her table several times, quite loudly, and quite manically. Once again, CECELIA will be appropriately startled.

CHASITY: (*Back to "normal".*) That's my poetry audition piece. It shows people I have classical training, even though I don't. Could you tell?

CECELIA: You have some very serious problems. You do know that?

CHASITY: I was afraid of that. I could use another poem, if you think that would be better. How about "Pop Goes the Weasel"? It's about a weasel in a microwave. (*Once more assuming the pose, reciting.*)
Oh, little weasel....

CECELIA: No...no. Please. We need to stay on schedule. Maybe later...

CHASITY: Gee, Miss Gilroy, that would be just swell. (*Sits.*)

CECELIA: Well...Umm...(To audience.) Here at Channel 15, you could almost call us sports fanatics. We routinely cover such exciting sporting events as Competitive Grilling...

Bring up lights on Left Apron, where the SPORTS ANNOUNCER is.

Thank you for reading this free excerpt from WIDK: CHANNEL 15 by Michael Soetaert. For performance rights and/or a complete copy of the script, please contact us at:

**Brooklyn Publishers, LLC
P.O. Box 248 • Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52406
Toll Free: 1-888-473-8521 • Fax (319) 368-8011
www.brookpub.com**