

PLEASE BE AWARE THAT  
THIS PLAY IS FULLY PROTECTED BY COPYRIGHT

All plays, books, music and other materials published by Heartland Plays, Inc. are fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America and all countries which the United States has reciprocal relations including, but not limited to all countries covered by the Pan-American Copyright Convention, The Universal Copyright Convention and the Berne Convention. All rights to the plays and materials on our website are strictly reserved including, and without limitation, professional and amateur performance rights; motion pictures; public reading; radio and television broadcasting; audio and video recording and reproduction of any type known or yet to be invented; information storage and retrieval systems of any type known or yet to be invented; and the rights of translation into any and all languages. No individual or organization whether amateur or stock may perform this or any play published by Heartland Plays, Inc. without first obtaining advance permission from Heartland Plays, Inc. and paying the appropriate fees including Royalties and Single-Use Copyright fees. Heartland Plays, Inc. collects royalties on behalf of the Playwrights whose plays it publishes. Unauthorized copying, transcribing or reproduction of this or any play or excerpt, or storage or transmittal in any form and by any means whether known or yet to be invented, is strictly forbidden except as provided by Agreement with Heartland Plays, Inc. Any unauthorized use is a violation of copyright laws and will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

FIVE SIMPLE RULES TO REMEMBER

1. DO take advantage of the free online perusal of our plays to help you make the best choice for your particular needs or production.
2. DO enjoy the convenience of our online purchase application for performance rights and single-use copyright.
3. DO understand that this play and all plays and materials on our website are controlled by Heartland Plays, Inc. and fully protected by copyright.
4. DO NOT attempt in any way to copy, transcribe or reproduce this play by any means or perform this play or use any play or material from our website without first receiving permission from Heartland Plays, Inc. Any attempt to use this or any other work without first obtaining permission is a violation of copyright and punishable by law.
5. DO NOT rob this Author or any of the Authors we represent of their right to be paid for the use of their property. It is a crime and it is wrong!

**Product Code A0390-FC**

# **Market Up, Mark it Down!**

**A Dot Com-edy**

**by**

**Jill Elaine Hughes**

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED  
REPRODUCTION WITHOUT SPECIFIC WRITTEN PERMISSION PROHIBITED

Performance Rights Available Exclusively through  
Heartland Plays, Inc. at [heartlandplays.com](http://heartlandplays.com)  
[playsnow@heartlandplays.com](mailto:playsnow@heartlandplays.com)  
customer service: 406-431-7680

Copyright © 2005 by Jill Elaine Hughes

# Market Up, Mark it Down!

by Jill Elaine Hughes

## **SETTING :**

*The offices of Stewart Spland & Company, LLC, an old-money Chicago investment bank, in the mid-1990s*

## **CHARACTERS:**

**LOUIE LAMPADDER;** *the ghost of a gangster stockbroker murdered in the 1920's who haunts the Spland & Company offices*

**JENNA JANSEN;** *a young woman fresh from graduate school just hired as an editor at Stewart Spland & Company, LLC*

**BRETT BEAN;** *a disgruntled, failed literary academic who runs the Editorial section of the Research department at Spland & Company, LLC*

**MARVIN HILL;** *an ambitious and angry co-editor at Spland & Company, LLC*

**LUCY LEAVER;** *secretary to the Editorial department*

**FRANK PEPSINETTI;** *a slow-witted, middle-aged senior partner who heads Spland & Company's research department*

**GIOVANNI GUINNESS;** *an abrasive British analyst who recently joined Spland & Company to pull off a scam*

**ANNETTE PONDER;** *an attractive and confused young research associate; she always dresses in designer suits and wears an enormous diamond wedding band/engagement ring set*

**THE DOT-COMMERS;** *(non-speaking, improvisational roles) three young entrepreneurs who run Sprockettwerks.com, an Austrian Internet startup seeking capital financing from Stewart Spland and Company*

## **ETC:**

**NOTES ON THE SET;** *The set can be simple so long as it includes conservative office furniture and desktop computers of the mid-1990s. Scenes taking place in bathrooms, hallways, etc. may be done as area staging.*

**EARLY PRODUCTION HISTORY** *available at end of script*

Market Up, Mark it Down!  
by Jill Elaine Hughes

ACT I; SCENE ONE

*(AT RISE: The stage is dark except for a single spot lighting center stage. Enter LOUIE in an expensive 1920's-era three-piece suit and fedora; he steps into the light.)*

LOUIE

Hiya. Name's Louie Lampadder, an' I'm dead. Since 1928. Youse all would derefore unnerstand dat I am a ghost. Yep. So, I'm dead. Back when I was *not* dead, I was a stockbroker an' futures trader. Well, not really. I was a gangster. My *racket* just happened to be stockbrokin' an' futures tradin' here at Stewart Spland and Company. All da brokers was gangsters in dem days. Lot of 'em are now, too, 'cept back den, we didn't *lie* 'bout bein' gangsters. Once upon a time in 1928, I sold a guy, name of Lefty Lombrowski, a buncha phony pork belly futures. Lefty liked to eat pork rinds soaked in vodka fer breakfast, see an' he once fired his tommy gun into his own Florshiem shoe on purpose, so he wuddunt too slick ya know. Well, Lefty eventually lost his "organization's" entire treasury to my phony pork bellies, an' he didn't like all da expired canned hams I sent him instead. So he decided to take it out of my ass, and several other orifices created by his tommygun. Following my demise, it was determined by da Ghosts' and Spirits' Union, Local No. twenty-tree, dat my soul would be doomed to haunt da offices of my employer until I had redeemed myself. Personally I woulda preferred hell. But dis is what I got instead. *(Snaps his fingers; OFFICE LIGHTS UP)* Well, it ain't 1928 no more, folks. It's 1995. Investment bankers, dat's what dey calls demselves dese days. Don't let da name fool ya. Dere ain't no better species of gangster on da planet. I should know, I was one. In the war it was plastics, den it was junk bonds ...but doya remember the radio days back in the 20s? Aw, no ya don't. Too goddamn young, all o' youse. Dat was when da investment racket was glamorous an' honorable—to a point. But it ain't no more. My jailors—dat is, my *employer*, da Ghosts' an' Spirits Union, requires dat I conduct at least *tree* noticeable haunting incidents per day in dis here office. I do my best, but dese days, most of da scary stuff roun' here is done by da living, not da dead. Dese crooks are puttin' me outa bizness. Come on an' see what I mean.

*(LOUIE snaps his fingers twice, and the curtain rises to reveal the STEWART SPLAND RESEARCH AUDITORIUM, the site of the company's weekly Stock Research meetings.)*

LOUIE

Now ain't dat swell? Aw, I love doin' dat.

## ACT II; SCENE TWO

*(AT RISE: the Stewart Spland Research auditorium. FRANK PEPSINETTI is leading the daily Spland Research meeting. ANNETTE PONDER is assisting GIOVANNI GUINNESS in giving a presentation. BRETT BEAN, MARVIN HILL, and JENNA JANSEN are in the audience; LUCY LEAVER is typing away frantically at her portable transcription machine. LOUIE hangs in the background. JENNA JANSEN is wearing a bright red suit with big shoulder pads for her first day on the job.)*

PEPSINETTI

Thanks everybody for coming to the meeting today. Gio Guinness will be doing a presentation on ahhh—what the hell is it again, Gio?

GUINNESS

The state of the petrochemical industry in Austria.

MARVIN

Austria? What's the hell is in Austria?

BRETT

*The Sound of Music* was in Austria.

JENNA

Hitler was from Austria, you know.

MARVIN

No he wasn't. Shh. It's starting.

GUINNESS

All right, thank you all for coming. For those of you who don't know me, I'm Giovanni Guinness, Spland & Company's new chemical industry analyst. One of the reasons I joined Spland was to help bring your company into the New Economy. I have some knowledge and connections that will boost Spland's stock recommendations for our clients, not to mention greatly expand Spland's own profits. To that end, lately I have been intrigued by the growing petrochemical industry in Austria, and on one Austrian company in particular, which in my opinion is set to take on the world—

PEPSINETTI

Sorry Gio, but before you go into the whole ahhh, presentation thing, can you ahhh, say how these Austrian companies, you know, help us out?

GUINNESS

If you'll just let me go on—

PEPSINETTI

Because we really just want to make sure that our clients, you know, would be interested in buyin' into this kinda thing...

GUINNESS

I assure you, Frank, that the numbers in this presentation and in my upcoming report will speak for themselves. Won't they, Annette?

*(GUINNESS shoots ANNETTE a subtle wink meant only for her to see; she looks very uneasy and tugs at the collar of her blouse.)*

ANNETTE

Uh, yeah, sure. Are you ready to start, Gio?

GUINNESS

Would you just start the presentation with the first slide, Annette darling? Most people think of Austria as a small landlocked Alpine country known for skiing and Mozart. But – next slide, please Annette? – It is also a country with great potential for investment in the petrochemical industry. Next slide, please Annette?

MARVIN

I have a question.

GUINNESS

Yes?

MARVIN

How do you know this is going to like, "take on the world?" I mean, Austria is just this little nothing country.

GUINNESS

Excuse me, who are you?

MARVIN

Well. I'm Marvin Hill, one of the research editors. And I really don't see how anything in Austria can—

GUINNESS

Annette, be a dear and shut Marvin up.

*(Shocked, MARVIN's jaw claps shut. ANNETTE throws MARVIN an "I don't know" gesture.)*

GUINNESS

That's better. Now, as you can see from this slide, the Austrian petrochemical industry has grown 386% since 1993. The Austrians are now taking advantage of Internet derivatives trading for furthering their business interests, and—

PEPSINETTI

Internet derivatives? What the hell's that?

LOUIE

Oh, I know dis one. My buddy Lennie, he haunts da offices over at Goldman Sachs— he told me all 'bout dose.

GUINNESS

Derivatives. You know.

PEPSINETTI

Uhh, nope.

LOUIE

Lennie explained derivatives dis way. You take a pillowcase, see—

GUINNESS

Well, surely you studied at least studied them in business school?

PEPSINETTI

Oh ahhh, I musta missed that class. (*Laughs*)

LOUIE

And you take dat pillowcase, see, an' you fill it up about halfway with some nice hot air...

GUINNESS

Derivatives grew out of the options and futures markets. Trading in options on hedges.

BRETT

Hedges? You mean, like shrubbery?

GUINNESS

Shrubbery? No!

LOUIE

...An' den you take dat pillowcase full of nice hot air, see, an' den you mix in some nice fresh dogshit...

MARVIN

Brett, he must be talking about another kind of hedge. Right?

GUINNESS

Well, obviously!

LOUIE

...An' den you take dat nice pillowcase full up with hot air an' dogshit, and you stir everything up until you got a nice hot-air/dogshit mixture, and den you throw in some cat piss too...

ANNETTE

Gio, I don't remember you saying anything about derivatives when we were working on this, um, last night, um, when we were—*together*—

PEPSINETTI

I don't care what a derivative is so long as somebody will buy it. Do people pay for these—deriv-ta-things?

GUINNESS

Of course.

LOUIE

...An' den you take dat nice shitty pillowcase...

GUINNESS

Now if you'll just let me—

LOUIE

...and you put it up for sale on the street for, I dunno—a million bucks.

GUINNESS

—go on, I'll explain everything.

LOUIE

An' *dat's* a derivative, folks.

MARVIN

But I still don't see how—

GUINNESS

Excuse me, Marvin, do you mind?

BRETT

But are they profitable? We only publish reports on profitable things, you know.

GUINNESS

Oh yes. Derivatives are quite profitable. Very, *very* profitable.

LOUIE

Yeah, most rackets are, buddy. Dat's why dey's called *rackets*.

PEPSINETTI

Well that's good.

LOUIE

An' da best part of da whole derivative racket is, dere are actually people out dere who will pay a million bucks for a pillowcase full of shit! Can you believe dat?

GUINNESS

Now as I'm sure everyone knows, with derivatives—

BRETT

Derivatives—okay, so are you talking about borrowing words from other languages or something? Because if you are, I have some great ideas about that.

GUINNESS

No, Dr. Bean.

BRETT

But—

GUINNESS

Dr. Bean, are you quite finished? Good. Now. Derivatives are trading in bets, in theories. Percentages of theories, really. For example, betting that a certain region will have a hurricane, another region will not, a certain oil well will hit paydirt and another will not, a certain war could happen in the future—*et cetera, et cetera*.

LOUIE

No matter what ya call it, it's still a pillowcase full of shit, folks.

MARVIN

It's theoretical investing. I think I like that.

BRETT

Why?

MARVIN

It's *theoretical*. It means you don't have to *do* anything.

LOUIE

Well, you gotta do somethin'. You gotta go pick up some dogshit off the street at least. But dat's about it.

GUINNESS

Marvin, I think you're catching on. This is where the next big market will be, gentlemen. Forget mutual funds. Forget junk bonds. This is the next gold rush. But unlike gold, Internet derivatives are an intangible asset. You can't exhaust the vein, mine it all out of the ground or anything like that.

PEPSINETTI

Uh, why not?

GUINNESS

Derivatives are *limitless*. You can just make them up, make up as many of them as you need, put them up on a website, and poof! You're in business!

LOUIE

Dat is such a swell racket. Winston Churchill here is good. He shoulda worked for Capone.

GUINNESS

By 1999, the total revenue for the Austrian petrochemical industry is expected to reach 122 billion Austrian schillings. And like I said before, the market in energy-related derivatives is absolutely limitless. Billions, trillions, quadrillions—there's no telling how high it will go. Especially now that you Americans have deregulated utilities. Next slide, please Annette?

BRETT

This is all well and good, but shouldn't you be recommending a real company's stock or something instead of spinning all these theories around?

*(LUCY falls asleep at her transcription machine and starts to snore.)*

GUINNESS

I was just getting to that. The exciting, new, and sure-to-make-billions company stock I will be discussing today is. . .Sprockettwerks.com.

*(GUINNESS notices LUCY asleep and raises his voice.)*

GUINNESS, *Continued*

Sprockettwerks.com. SPROCKETTWERKS.COM!!!

*(LUCY jumps awake and resumes typing.)*

PEPSINETTI

Sprockettwerks-dot-what? Sounds foreign.

GUINNESS

Everyone knows the most important new markets are overseas, Frank.

PEPSINETTI

Right. Yeah. What the hell's a sprockett again?

GUINNESS

Well, the actual sprocketts don't really come into play here—it's just part of their name. Purely a brick-and-mortar thing, sprocketts.

PEPSINETTI

Huh?

GUINNESS

Sprockettwerks.com is new company that will be using the Internet to sell their energy derivative products online, at very low overhead. Day trading for the energy and oil markets, if you will.

PEPSINETTI

I'm so glad we finally got a smart English guy in the office to explain all of this cool, uh-huh, stuff, to us!

LOUIE

Yeah, 'cause you don't know nuttin'.

BRETT

Excuse me, Gio. I don't mean to be a devil's advocate here or anything, but I studied my geography and history quite diligently in college and I don't recall anything about there being any oil in Austria.

GUINNESS

You are most correct, Dr. Bean. There is no oil to be found naturally in Austria.

LOUIE

Dey make some real good beer dere, tho. Dat Austrian stuff was Capone's biggest seller back in da day.

BRETT

Well, *I* think the whole thing looks a bit suspicious.

LOUIE

Oooo, *ya think?* Way to go there, Einstein.

ANNETTE

Well, I kind of thought that too, but—

GUINNESS

Annette, hush, dear. I have not discussed anything pertaining to the drilling or refining of oil in Austria. Have I, Dr. Bean?

BRETT

No, but—

GUINNESS

Very well, then. I don't recall being on trial here, Dr. Bean. What makes Sprockettwerks.com so intriguing, Dr. Bean, is the fact it will be managing all its derivatives trading tasks via the Internet, using this technology to import crude oil from the Middle East and then resell it virtually to refining companies in *untraceable* transactions. Er ahh—electronic transactions, rather. Ahem.

LOUIE

Ya know, all of Capone's guys did all their "transactions" with unmarked bills, too.

PEPSINETTI

What's all this ahhhhh, jazz about, what's-it-called—the Internet? I'm sorry, Gio, but I just don't understand all this ahhh, sprockett stuff.

LOUIE

Oh, dere's a big surprise.

GUINNESS

Good gracious, Frank. Be serious. The Internet? We all know what that is, right? It's bloody 1995 now, people. Are you all just completely backwards here in the States?

MARVIN

Doesn't that whole Internet thing have something to do with our e-mail?

BRETT

No, I don't think that's the same thing. "Internet". You know, I keep hearing that word these days

GUINNESS

Good God. What have I got myself into here? Annette?

ANNETTE

Gio, I—I don't know. I thought everybody already knew what the Internet was—I mean, *I* do.

MARVIN

I'm don't like to use my e-mail. I prefer faxes. You can touch a fax—you can't touch an e-mail.

PEPSINETTI

Why don't you just go on there with you ahhh, stuff Gio, and we can talk about this Internet thing later.

GUINNESS

Well, I'm not sure how I'm going to discuss anything about Sprockettwerks.com if you don't even know what the buggery Internet is— Fine. Sprockettwerks.com has an absolutely foolproof – and I mean ABSOLUTELY foolproof – business model for selling energy derivatives on the Internet. You see in the coming years Internet IPOs are truly the wave of the future in investing.

JENNA

I have a question, Mr. Guinness.

GUINNESS

Yes, what is it? Who are you?

JENNA

Um, I'm Jenna Jansen, the new stock reports editor. I just started work here today, actually. Hi. Now this might seem a bit out of left field, but I was just wondering, um Mr. Guinness, when you were developing this whole derivatives investment plan of yours, whether you took into account the possible effect of the upcoming Austrian election and the E.U.'s derivatives trading regulations on e-commerce?

GUINNESS

*(Pause)* I'm not sure what you mean.

JENNA

Well, it could get really complicated over there in Austria. I mean, they just entered the E.U. after being traditionally neutral, and what with the Austrian Social Democrats losing their hold on power and the E.U.'s stance on high energy taxes and everything—it could be a potentially volatile place to do business. I mean—I think so, anyway.

*(GUINNESS is taken aback by JENNA's question, blinks a few times, and drops his laser pointer.)*

GUINNESS

Quite—quite an interesting question. Yes. Well. Annette?

ANNETTE

What?

GUINNESS

Would you care to answer Ms.—Jensen’s question?

ANNETTE

Uhh—

JENNA

I think that to leave out this key political information from the report would be a great disservice to Spland’s key clients.

ANNETTE

I—I really don’t know anything about this. I just went to the Bloomberg terminal and printed out some stuff—Gio?

GUINNESS

Ms. Jensen—

JENNA

It’s *Jansen*. Jenna Jansen.

GUINNESS

Right. May I ask how you ahhhh...know so much about Austrian politics and ahhh, e-commerce?

JENNA

Oh, just personal interests of mine. I used to live in Austria—when I was growing up my dad worked for Siemens. I lived in Vienna for four years and in Salzburg for two.

BRETT

That wasn’t on your résumé.

GUINNESS

I take it your German must be quite good, then?

JENNA

*Oh, ja, mein Deutsche ist sehr gut.* And that was on my résumé.

MARVIN

Pshaw.

GUINNESS

I see. Well. To answer your question, you’ll—you’ll just have to wait until we come out with our full report, in which we will—we *might* incorporate possible effects of the new regulations into our financial forecast. Well. Does that answer your question?

JENNA

For the time being.

GUINNESS

All right, fine. With that said, Annette, why don't you skip ahead to slide number...16?

*(BLACKOUT. A pool of light marks center stage; LOUIE steps into it. LIGHT ON JENNA who is frozen in silhouette.)*

LOUIE

Who is dis hot little package, huh? I ain't never seen her around here before. Ya know, da money stuff here at Spland stopped thrillin' me years ago. I only wish my old gal Lucille coulda thrilled me as much as dis new girl just did. An' I am in some serious need of a thrill, if ya know what I mean. Oh, Sweet Lucille, with your platinum hair an' Clara Bow pout, how I've missed you over da years. Boy, you were a devil in da sack—you were da bee's knees, baby. Too bad Capone's guys got to you first. Oh Lucille, if I could just get outa hauntin' dis damned office, maybe I could get down to hell and see you again. But I'll never get outa here—goddamned ghost union crap . . . Which reminds me.

*(LOUIE takes several packages of airline peanuts out of his pocket and scatters them onto the floor.)*

LOUIE, *Continued*

I gotta try somethin' to make dese fools notice dat I'm here. Dat's my job, see. I'm s'posta get dese guys' attention somehow. Dat's what a ghost, is s'posta do, right? But nothun' I've tried has worked. But if I don't at least try, I get punished by da union. As if bein' trapped here listenin' to dese idiots weren't punishment enough. My union steward keeps tellin' me tho, dat I need to be workin' harder at da whole redemption part of my jail sentence. Otherwise I'll never get outa here to see my gal Lucille. I dunno what I'm s'posta do to redeem myself when nobody even notices dat I'm here. Brett Bean hoards dese here airplane nuts in da bottom drawer of his desk. He's one o' dose types o' guys that goes on da train an' asks da porter to bring him all the free stuff, including da toy locomotive an' the official railroad tooth powder. I know youse all take planes now, but I ain't never had no experience with nuthin' but da Burlington Northern and Santa Fe myself. In my day, only Amelia Earhart an' Lucky Lindy flew planes. Whaddayaknow 'bout dat? Well, you're probably getting' kinda bored now. Watch dis while I go take a piss. Hey, ghosts gotta piss sometimes too, ya know.

*(LOUIE snaps his fingers twice; LIGHTS CROSSFADE to BRETT'S OFFICE.)*

## ACT I; SCENE THREE

(AT RISE: BRETT's office; BRETT, MARVIN HILL, and JENNA JANSEN meeting.)

BRETT

I know this is only your second day on the job, Jenna, but I must say that what you did in that meeting was completely out of line.

JENNA

How was it any more out of line than the questions you both asked?

MARVIN

You never embarrass a senior partner in a meeting. Ever.

JENNA

But you both tried to—

MARVIN

No. No we didn't. *Our* questions were legitimate.

JENNA

You guys don't even know what the Internet is, for crying out loud. Wait—I'm sorry. Please don't think I'm being mean by saying that or anything, but—

BRETT

Our questions are not at issue here.

JENNA

Mr. Guinness dismissed them. I mean, well—if I had been him, *I* would have—

BRETT

That's beside the point. You are in no position to criticize investment analysts of much higher rank and experience than you, especially on your second day of work.

JENNA

I was only trying to help

BRETT

I'm sure you meant well. But I advise you from now on to keep your ears open and your mouth shut.

JENNA

(*Sighs audibly*) I will.

BRETT

Sorry about this, Jenna. I know this is a lot to take in on your first day. Why don't you go back to your office and edit something? I put some new report drafts on your desk, you can work on those. I'll stop by to check on you in a minute.

*(JENNA exits dejectedly.)*

MARVIN

I knew she would be trouble. Didn't I tell you she would be trouble?

BRETT

No.

MARVIN

Well, I meant to. And you should listen to what I mean, not what I say.

BRETT

I think you're going to have to clarify that statement.

MARVIN

You know, Brett—

BRETT

It's DR. BEAN! Why won't anybody call me that??? I have a Ph.D. in literature from *Marquette* University for Christ's sake!

MARVIN

Sorry. You know, *Dr. Bean*, you and I were doing just fine here in Editorial all by ourselves. But then you had to go hire Jenna, and now that little busybody is messing up all our plans!

BRETT

What plans? We don't *have* any plans. You're overreacting.

MARVIN

I'm not overreacting. You're underreacting.

BRETT

I don't like to react to things. It makes me anxious.

MARVIN

Oh, that's so typical, Brett. Obviously, you're going to need me to lay things out for you. That new editor Jenna is a know-it-all bitch. That's just all there is to it, Brett.

BRETT

Now let's not blow this out of proportion—

MARVIN

I'm not blowing anything out of proportion. I am a realist, Brett.

BRETT

*Dr. Bean.* Marvin, have you considered going back into therapy?

MARVIN

I don't *need* therapy.

BRETT

Jenna was just sharing some information that no one else had. You could even say she was being mutually beneficial.

MARVIN

"Mutually beneficial." What the hell kind of expression is that?

BRETT

I just made it up.

MARVIN

She made us look like idiots.

BRETT

Wait a minute—let's just look at this from a structural perspective. If we take it systematically, all Jenna really did wrong in the meeting was break the office power code. Research editors, let alone research new editors, don't argue with senior partners. No matter what. She got chastised – as she deserved – and that's the end of it.

MARVIN

But that's not the end of it, Brett. We did the same thing she did, and she pointed it out to everyone! Why don't we just walk around with "dumbass" signs around our necks—it'd be easier.

BRETT

Well, we just have more leeway when it comes to violating the office power code than she does. After all, *I* have a Ph.D.

MARVIN

But I don't.

BRETT

Well you're just...respected here via your association with me.

MARVIN

Where are you going with this, Brett?

BRETT

*Dr. Bean.* Jenna just didn't know any better. But she'll learn. I'll make sure she learns.

MARVIN

Yeah, my ass. Brett, let me tell you something. I'm a simple guy. I don't need much to keep me happy. But let me tell you what I do need. I need things to go back to the way they were before you hired that little bitch. It was just you and me, just hanging around reading *Fortune* and only having edit reports once or twice a week. It was quiet. It was simple. It was peace.

BRETT

I'll give you that.

MARVIN

I want *peace* back! I don't want some little German-speaking hoity-toity who wants to save the world screwing with MY PEACE! You got that?

*(Enter LOUIE, who has a piece of toilet paper stuck to the bottom of his shoe.)*

LOUIE

Ya know, I'd really like to get a piece of Marvin's underwear sometime. So I can pull 'em right outa his ass.

*(During the following conversation, LOUIE opens one of BRETT's drawers and takes more bags of cocktail peanuts out of it, which he slips into his pocket. BRETT takes no notice.)*

BRETT

Marvin, you really should try to be more positive about Jenna. She could be good for us, you know.

MARVIN

How?

LOUIE

Marvin, you don't get much tail, doya? Doya?

*(LOUIE pokes MARVIN in the temple a few times. MARVIN rubs absently at his temple but otherwise does not notice LOUIE.)*

LOUIE

It's like I ain't even here. Crimenitney.

BRETT

You know, if Jenna gets on Pepsinetti's good side, it could move the status of us editors up on the office totem pole enough for me to get my Standard Written Financial English project off the ground companywide.

MARVIN

Oh, Jesus H. Christ. You're still hung up on that? I thought we shelved that idea.

BRETT

I've modified it. It's better now.

MARVIN

Old man Baines was so pissed off after you edited his report with that cockeyed system of yours, you had to buy him three table dances at Farley's Lounge to shut him up.

BRETT

Yeah and three weeks later Baines killed himself. So what?

MARVIN

Yeah, "so what" is right.

BRETT

Marvin, I've been retooling my language paradigm. It makes so much more sense now. I'm going to teach it to Jenna. That'll give her a nice little project to work on.

MARVIN

Oh, great.

BRETT

I mean, if she's already fluent in German, then surely she's capable of learning *my* language system. You know, I was even thinking about sending a copy of the new version to *Modern Linguistics*—

MARVIN

You really don't have enough to do with your time, Brett.

BRETT

Can't you please call me Dr. Bean? Would it *kill* you to acknowledge my education? I need a snack.

LOUIE

Oh. Here we go.

*(BRETT opens a drawer in his desk and begins to rummage through it, deliberately at first, then frantically.)*

BRETT

Where the hell are all my peanuts? You know I can't get through a panic attack without my peanuts!

MARVIN

You might want to switch to Xanax. Dr. Bean.

*(LOUIE snaps his fingers twice; BRETT and MARVIN freeze.)*

LOUIE

I got yer peanuts right here, Brett. Maybe if you two guys weren't such concorb-asses you'd notice dat I *took* 'em! Whatta buncha maroons.

*(LOUIE snaps his fingers twice. LIGHTS CROSSFADE to PESINETTI'S OFFICE.)*

## ACT I; SCENE FOUR

*(AT RISE: PESINETTI's office; GIOVANNI GUINNESS, FRANK PEPSINETTI, and ANNETTE PONDER meeting.)*

GUINNESS

What was the meaning of you supporting that little bitch's observation?

PEPSINETTI

You mean that cute little editor Bean just hired? Man, she is *cute*!

LOUIE

Yeah, dat girl reminds me of da gals you see in da funnypages. Like Brenda Starr.

PEPSINETTI

I think she looks just like Little Orphan Annie.

LOUIE

Little Orphan Annie? I said Brenda Starr, ya dumbass.

ANNETTE

Who's Little Orphan Annie?

PEPSINETTI

*(Singing)* "The Sun'll Come Out"—*(Spoken)* Never mind.

GUINNESS

Cute or not, someone needs to put her in her place.

PEPSINETTI

I thought she made some good points about all that ahhhh, Austria stuff. And she speaks German too—wow! I'm sure impressed.

GUINNESS

*(Under his breath)* I'm sure it doesn't take much to impress the likes of you.

LOUIE

Ya got dat right.

ANNETTE

I liked her too.

GUINNESS

You would. She only humiliated us in front of the whole bleeding department.

ANNETTE

I think you should ask her to help us.

GUINNESS

I think you should shut your bloody trap. I'm in charge here.

*(ANNETTE is visibly hurt.)*

PEPSINETTI

I know you and I have different ways of looking at things, Gio, and that's fine—that's normal, even, but what I mean to say is, uhhhh, I am still the head of this department, and—

GUINNESS

I am fully aware that you are my superior, Frank.

PEPSINETTI

Damn straight I am! Papa Pepsinetti didn't have three heart attacks and leave this department to me in his will for nothing.

ANNETTE

Oh! Oh, I'm so sorry. About your Papa, I mean.

PEPSINETTI

Yeah, thanks. Now Gio, I *am* your boss—

GUINNESS

Yes, I know.

PEPSINETTI

And as your boss, I order you to take that nice young Little Orphan Annie lady's—what's her name again?

ANNETTE

Jenna.

PEPSINETTI

—That you take Jenna’s—ahhh, thoughts—into consideration. As an important, careful consideration, you know? You know what I mean. Just do it.

GUINNESS

I’m sure I can come up with ways for her to help me. Can’t I, Annette?

ANNETTE

Yes. No. I’m sorry—I have to...go. (*Exits in a rush, near tears*)

LOUIE

Uh oh. Dat’s gonna leave a mark.

PEPSINETTI

I ahhh, see you have partaken of Annette’s forbidden fruit.

GUINNESS

Is Annette always like this?

PEPSINETTI

Like what?

GUINNESS

Flirty sex kitten one minute, and then blubbering doorstep the next? Moody.

PEPSINETTI

Yeah, that’s why after I stopped seeing her I let Baines mess with her at the Christmas party last year. But then he up and shot himself two weeks later.

GUINNESS

An interesting coincidence.

PEPSINETTI

Yeah, I kinda always wondered if the two things were related.

*(LIGHTS CROSSFADE to the hallway outside the office. ANNETTE, rushing down the hallway, slams into LUCY, sending papers and files everywhere.)*

LUCY

Slow down, sweetheart. Where’s the fire?

ANNETTE

I’m going to the bathroom.

LUCY

Well, okay sweetheart. Is it an emergency or somethin’?

ANNETTE

You could say that. I'm so sorry, Lucy. I didn't mean to knock you over.

LUCY

Oh, you're only 'bout the fourth person today. Don't you even mention it. I understand how you're feelin', sugar. When this place gets to you, just go on into the bathroom, roll yourself out a big wad o' toilet paper an' go all the way back to the last stall. That's the designated cryin' stall.

ANNETTE

Are you sure?

LUCY

Believe me, I'm real familiar with the cryin' stall. After you've been here as many years as I have you'll learn to take advantage of it when you need to.

ANNETTE

I've never had to cry here before.

LUCY

Go on now, honey. Take as long as you need. I'll cover for you.

*(ANNETTE exits. LIGHTS CROSSFADE back to PEPSINETTI's office. LOUIE is still there, trying in vain to get PEPSINETTI's attention by alternatively pounding on desks, banging books together, and whacking PEPSINETTI on the shoulders. PEPSINETTI takes no notice of him.)*

PEPSINETTI

You'll ahhh, definitely have to fill us in on this new Internet-deriv-ta-thing you were talking about earlier. Hey, wait a minute. Is there a draft in here?

LOUIE

'Course dere is, dumbass. It's called ME.

GUINNESS

I don't feel a draft.

PEPSINETTI

Are you sure? 'Cause I could swear there's a draft in here.

GUINNESS

No.

LOUIE

Aw, jeez.

PEPSINETTI

So you think an IPO is the way to go on these Internet-sprockett doohickeys?

GUINNESS

Absolutely. It's quite the capital opportunity.

PEPSINETTI

You know, I really love the way you talk, Gio. All—all proper an' all.

LOUIE

*(Knocking harder on PEPSINETTI's head)* Hello! Anybody home? I'm trying to *haunt* somebody here! Tryin' to make my daily quota here!

PEPSINETTI

Do you hear that?

GUINNESS

No.

LOUIE

*(Still pounding PEPSINETTI's head)* Dat's it, dat's it—notice da fact dat I'm poundin' on yer head right now—dat's good, dumbass—

PEPSINETTI

Coulda swore I heard something. You don't hear that?

GUINNESS

No.

PEPSINETTI

Oh. Well. Never mind.

LOUIE

Damn it.

GUINNESS

This Sprockettwerks.com opportunity is really first-class, Frank. We'll make some great profits.

PEPSINETTI

Yep. You know the clients—they love profits.

GUINNESS

Clients, shmilients. Always with the clients. You know, Frank, I think you have a tendency to think too small. And you're not a small man, are you Frank?

PEPSINETTI

(Blushing) Well—

GUINNESS

Of course you aren't.

LOUIE

I beg to differ. I've seen him at da urinal.

GUINNESS

You're a second-generation Spland employee, Frank. You're aiming for bigger and better things, right? You'd want to do your Papa proud, right?

PEPSINETTI

Well, yeah—

GUINNESS

Well, Frank, if bigger and better things are what you want, stop thinking about the client and start thinking about yourself. These technology IPOs are *not* the best choice for our clients. But they *are* the best choice for us.

LOUIE

I smell a rat.

PEPSINETTI

Really?

GUINNESS

Really. Especially since we can control the bulk of the work here in Research, away from Legal Compliance and Corporate Finance.

PEPSINETTI

Yeah, they don't like us to go up there. But—

GUINNESS

I'm so glad to hear you approve! All the big banks are using analysts to negotiate the IPO deals now. It makes sense. Analysts can cheerlead the stock all the way to the top of the market if they want, without any lawyers sniffing their dirty noses around. And when the analysts are in on the accounting too, well—let me just say there's no limit to where things can go. Arthur Andersen and the other Big Five accounting firms—they're out way ahead on this. Morgan Stanley is following their lead—there's nothing saying we can't do the same.

LOUIE

Yeah, my buddy Lennie was tellin' me 'bout dat racket just da other day. It's even better than runnin' da numbers.

PEPSINETTI

That's great. Wait. Wait a minute. What about ahhh, the Chinese Wall...thing? We can't break the Chinese Wall. Can we?

GUINNESS

Oh, blast the Chinese Wall. Bloody American securities regulations. We don't need to worry about that. The realm of Internet derivatives is so new the laws haven't even had time to catch up.

PEPSINETTI

Uhhh—Oh yeah, okay right. Catch up to what? Illegal stuff?

GUINNESS

“Illegal” is such a strong word, Frank. “Unethical” would be more appropriate. But fortunately for us, *unethical* isn't the same as *illegal*.

LOUIE

What, you afraid of *illegal*? Hey. *Real* gangsters don't let a little thing like dat stop 'em.

PEPSINETTI

Well, would there be money in it at least?

GUINNESS

Ethical people generally don't become rich, Frank. That's Rule No. 1 of investment banking.

LOUIE

Hmph. Duh.

PEPSINETTI

Well yeah, but—

GUINNESS

You wanted to know why I came here to Stewart Spland from the U.K.

PEPSINETTI

Yeah, I was kinda curious about that.

GUINNESS

I came to make a fortune.

*(LIGHTS CROSSFADE back to the hallway where LUCY is stooped over gathering the last of her papers and files.)*

LUCY

Oh God, my back sure ain't what it used to be. There. That's everything, finally.

*(LUCY folds the papers files in the crook of her arm and slowly gets up. As she does, MARVIN bolts in carrying an empty coffee cup, and he knocks LUCY – and the papers – over.)*

LUCY, *Continued*

Oh—oh my Lord.

MARVIN

Lucy, you really should watch where you're going. Where is Jenna? Have you seen Jenna? Where the hell did she go?

LUCY

I thought I saw her in her office.

MARVIN

Are those the copies I asked you to make two hours ago? Why did it take you so long? Make sure they're collated and on my desk before I go to lunch.

LUCY

But—

*(Enter JENNA.)*

JENNA

Oh. Hi Marvin. Which way is the bathroom, please? I keep getting lost in these hallways. They all look the same.

MARVIN

*(Looks JENNA up and down)* I hope you're not going to be wearing that suit every day.

JENNA

What do you mean? It's my brand new suit. I bought it especially for starting this job—

MARVIN

It's too red. Nobody wears red at Stewart Spland and Company. Stick to grays and browns.

JENNA

But—

MARVIN

Red draws too much attention to your face. Stick to brown.

(Exit MARVIN.)

LUCY

He should really switch to decaf.

JENNA

Yeah. I think you're right.

LUCY

Jenna, I haven't had a chance to introduce myself yet. I'm Lucy. Lucy Leaver. I'll be working with you over in Editorial.

JENNA

Hi, Lucy. Nice to meet you. I really haven't had much chance to meet anyone today. I've been too busy—screwing up.

LUCY

Hon, you're doing just fine. Don't let me keep you—the toilet's right down there around the corner.

JENNA

Thanks.

(LIGHTS CROSSFADE back to PEPSINETTI's office.)

GUINNESS

Frank, let me just lay everything out on the table. We have an opportunity to do an initial public offering on a shell company at an artificially elevated price—not to mention doing all kinds of tie-ins and increased commissions – kickbacks, if you will – without your bloody Securities and Exchange Commission laying a finger on us. It'll be the scam of the century. And we'll get off scot-free.

LOUIE

I dunno 'bout scam of da *century*, but—

PEPSINETTI

But what about all that Sprockett stuff?

GUINNESS

My God man, don't you get it? There are no sprocketts, no derivatives, no anything. There never were. What we are talking about here is nothing more than a foolproof *Ponzi* scheme.

PEPSINETTI

I don't understand.

LOUIE

It's a racket, ya dumbass!

*(LOUIE swats PEPSINETTI on the side of the head.)*

PEPSINETTI

This is starting to give me a headache, Gio. I just don't get it.

LOUIE

Aw, maybe I should just quit dis right now.

GUINNESS

You don't have to understand it, Frank. Just trust me. Let me use Spland as an umbrella for launching the IPO, talk it up to the media, don't ask any questions, and I'll make you a very, very, very rich man. You won't have to do a thing.

LOUIE

Well dat's easy, 'cause he don't do nuttin' anyway.

PEPSINETTI

Are you sure?

GUINNESS

Sure as sure can be, Frank. We Brits used to pull this kind of thing off all the time in India. My grandfather made millions on the Indian rail system in the 30's using the same strategy. Well, it wasn't an actual rail system, it was, shall we say, a *virtual* rail system. But that didn't stop those curry-swilling Indians from investing in it!

*(GUINNESS starts to laugh; PEPSINETTI joins in, uneasily.)*

LOUIE

Dat's it. Just laugh yer asses off like I ain't even here. Dis just ain't funny no more.

*(LOUIE whacks PEPSINETTI on the head again, and exits in a huff.)*

PEPSINETTI

*(Holding his head)* Ow. Hey Gio, have you got any aspirin?

*(LIGHTS FADE OUT on PEPSINETTI's office.)*

## ACT I; SCENE FIVE

*(AT RISE: The ladies' room; ANNETTE crying. LOUIE is standing just outside the bathroom door, his ear to the wall.)*

ANNETTE

*(Kicking the stall door)* Goddamn it, Gio! Stupid, stupid, stupid jerk! Why do I always do this. . .

LOUIE

Hoo boy. Looks like our friend Winston Churchill's already got to her, folks.

*(Enter JENNA.)*

JENNA

Hey, are you OK?

ANNETTE

Please. Go away. *(Sobs louder)*

JENNA

I just wanted to help. Maybe I can help you?

ANNETTE

I'm not sure you can. I'm kind of in over my head.

LOUIE

Dat's puttin' it mildly. Winston Churchill likes his associates to wear kneepads to work, if ya know what I mean.

JENNA

It can't be that bad. Nothing is ever that bad. It just seems that way in the beginning. Here, sit down. Tell me all about it.

*(ANNETTE sits down on the toilet.)*

ANNETTE

Well, I just started working for this new analyst Gio Guinness, and I'm trying to like, get ahead in the office, you know? Like you know my parents always said, climb the ladder at work, do whatever you have to do to get ahead, marry well, money and security is the best way to be happy you know? Like as long as you're comfortable you'll be happy? So I always tried to do what they told me to do—

JENNA

What your parents told you to do?

ANNETTE

Yeah, and what my B-school professors taught me to do too, but I must be doing something wrong, because I'm like, totally miserable, you know? I mean, like today. I screwed up everything, just like I always do here in the office—stupid, stupid, stupid me—I jump in way too fast, and act the wrong way—and it just messes everything up—

JENNA

You take on too much, you mean? Project-wise?

ANNETTE

If you want to put it that way, sure. . .

LOUIE

Whoa, Nellie.

JENNA

Now come on. Chin up. No job is worth crying your heart out in the bathroom over. If you're feeling overworked, you just have to go to your boss and tell him that you need to take a break. That you need to step back, and focus more on the work that's most important to you. You're a Research Associate, right?

ANNETTE

Uh huh.

JENNA

Well, you Research Associates are here to learn, right?

*(ANNETTE nods through her tears.)*

JENNA, *Continued*

Right. You're here to learn the business, and not to work yourselves to death trying. You'll burn yourself out before you even have a career that way.

ANNETTE

If you say so...

JENNA

Hey, I'm not just saying so. That's the way the system works.

ANNETTE

You really think so?

JENNA

I know so. At least, I'm pretty sure I know so.

ANNETTE

So, you really think I should talk to Gio about it? About...our relationship?

LOUIE

Relationship? Hmm. (*Sings*) You say potato, an' I say po-tah-to...

JENNA

Absolutely. You need to have a good working relationship with your boss, of course.

LOUIE

(*Sings*) You say tomato, and I say to-mah-to...

ANNETTE

All right, I will. At my—meeting today with Gio, in the supply closet, I'll tell him that it's all over. We just can't go on they way we are.

LOUIE

(*Sings*) Tomato, to-mah-to, potato, po-tah-to, let's call the whole thing off...

JENNA

Of course you can't. You have to establish the right boundaries for yourself.

ANNETTE

You know, you are a really nice person.

JENNA

Wow, thank you. That's the best thing anybody's said to me all day.

ANNETTE

So you're having a bad day, too?

JENNA

Well sort of. It's been kind of hard day, you know, starting the new job, trying to figure everybody out. Is it just me or is everyone here a little weird?

ANNETTE

It's not just you. Everything's weird here. Do you know that some people say this place is haunted?

LOUIE

Wait—wait—haunted? Does dat mean somebody actually knows I'm here?

JENNA

Really?

ANNETTE

Yeah, supposedly we have an office ghost.

JENNA

A ghost? Really?

LOUIE

Dat's right! Dat's right!

ANNETTE

But I've never seen a ghost, or heard one, or anything. It's probably just bullshit.

LOUIE

But I'm standin' right here!!

ANNETTE

But anyway, I thought you did a great job this morning at the research meeting. Except for the whole embarrassing me and Gio part.

JENNA

Well, yeah, that was kind of stupid. I already caught hell for that.

ANNETTE

No it wasn't stupid at all! I think you're really brave and smart for doing that. I mean, I could *never*—can you help me? I mean, can you help Gio and me get the facts straight on this Austria report? I think Mr. Pepsinetti even wants you to.

JENNA

Sure.

ANNETTE

Well, thanks—

JENNA

Jenna. Jenna Jansen.

*(JENNA and ANNETTE shake hands.)*

ANNETTE

Oh, it's almost 3:30. Time for me to go to the supply closet—thing. Thanks again.

*(ANNETTE exits. JENNA stands puzzled for a moment, then realizes what is meant by "supply closet.")*

JENNA

Supply closet? Oh my God.

*(JENNA exits, tripping over LOUIE on her way out, but instead of noticing him, she just thinks something is wrong with her shoe.)*

LOUIE

*(Sings)* Let's call the whole...thing...off! *(Spoken)* Zoop-de-do-dow. Dammit! I thought I was on a roll.

*(LIGHTS OUT.)*

## ACT I; SCENE SIX

*(AT RISE: JENNA JANSEN's office. JENNA is editing an article BRETT gave her as LOUIE leans against the wall, watching her.)*

JENNA

*(Reading aloud)* “Year-over-year sales 26%. Stock potential medium to high. Fully diluted earnings per share \$2.34. Okay, this makes absolutely no sense.

LOUIE

You're just a babe in da woods dere, Brenda Starr. And *what* a babe you are, too! Sure wish I could get ya to notice me. You an' me, we could make beautiful music together.

*(JENNA glances around the room as if she heard something, shrugs, and then scans the rest of the article silently.)*

LOUIE

I'm gettin' nowhere. Well, I'll just be takin' my coffee break now, folks.

*(LOUIE exits.)*

JENNA

*(Reading aloud)* “On the basis of our current understanding of the current state of the national intermodal transportation industry, it is our opinion that— *(Reads silently)*

JENNA, *Continued*

Hmmmm, that must be a typo. Why did they have to say “year-over-year” twice?—blahblahblah—“Importantly, we believe”—“always it has been true”—“fortunately, good is the market” Did Yoda write this or something? Whew.

*(SFX: the phone rings.)*

JENNA, *Continued*

Hello, this is Jenna Jansen. Oh, hi Mom. How'd you get the number here? Oh. I'm surprised they had my name on the list already. Well, it's not exactly what I thought it would be. Well, what else can I do, Mom? I can't go back to temping. Well, in an ideal world, yes, but it took me six months to find even this job after graduation, and I'll just have to stick it out until I figure something else out. Yeah. Yeah, I know. I know, Mom—liberal arts is not a practical major, I should have been an engineer. No. No, I'm *not* becoming an engineer Mom. Mom, of course I'll find some way to make myself valuable. I didn't just fall off the banana boat yesterday. I gotta go. Thanks for calling, it really means a lot to me. Love you, too. Bye.

*(Enter BRETT BEAN.)*

BRETT

Hi there, Jenna. I see you're already hard at work.

JENNA

Yeah, umm, before I got started editing that piece you gave me, I thought I'd read up on some of the publications you've edited, you know—to help me get acclimated to Spland's style—

BRETT

You know Jenna, that's just the suggestion I was going to make. You're way ahead of me.

JENNA

Oh. Well. Good.

BRETT

*(Over-eager)* So, what do you think of Spland's publications so far?

JENNA

Um, well, I haven't exactly read all of them yet, but I was kind of wondering—who wrote this?

BRETT

I did. Well, most of it—I just took the analyst's notes, and uhhh, reconstructed them—

JENNA

You did. Oh.

BRETT

Why? Is something wrong?

JENNA

Well...

BRETT

Well, what?

JENNA

Are all of Spland's reports written like this?

BRETT

Of course. So, tell me what you think? Oh, and be honest. Please.

JENNA

This is just my opinion, you know Brett—but...well...

BRETT

Please, call me Dr. Bean.

JENNA

Okay, *Dr. Bean*. Since you asked, I'll be honest. I think—I think this particular report, on the railroad industry, is very—bad.

BRETT

Well, I wouldn't necessarily say it's *bad*—

JENNA

Actually, it's awful. It breaks all the rules of grammar. It's like written in code or something.

BRETT

It's just highly technical.

JENNA

"Always it had been true"—you write like a Jedi master.

BRETT

That's a rather forward thing to say on your first day here, Jenna.

JENNA

I know, I know. I'm sorry. But you did ask me to be honest, Brett—I mean, Dr. Bean.

BRETT

So I did. Point taken. Jedi master—hey, that's sort of funny. Yeah. Well, Jenna, you'll find you have a lot to learn about how we do things here.

JENNA

I guess so.

BRETT

To start out, why don't you read this?

*(BRETT takes a Kinko's-bound copybook from the shelf and hands it to JENNA.)*

JENNA

*(Reading from the cover)* Standard Written Financial English?

BRETT

That's right. It's a new system of grammar tailored to the financial industry. I developed it myself. Based it on my Ph.D. dissertation.

JENNA

I see. You know, I really don't—um...I—

BRETT

It's revolutionary. I think it will be the most important thing to happen to the English language since the Great Vowel Shift of 1543.

JENNA

What?

BRETT

Don't you see? My new language system will completely revolutionize the way the world does business.

JENNA

I thought Esperanto was supposed to do that.

BRETT

Esperanto? Oh, yeah, right. Well, my system is much, much better than Esperanto. It actually makes sense.

JENNA

So you're fluent in Esperanto, I take it?

BRETT

Well, no not exactly. I was just making a—verbal reference.

JENNA

Uh-huh.

BRETT

Why? Do you know Esperanto?

JENNA

I know it fairly well. My father was actually a big supporter of Esperanto when I was growing up. It's really too bad it never caught on.

BRETT

Oh. Well. Anyway, just take a look. I think a sharp person like you would be interested in my little system.

JENNA

Okay. I'll-ummm. Sure.

BRETT

Wow, it's six-thirty already. I'll see you tomorrow, Jenna. I have to get going or I'll be late for my colonic appointment.

*(BRETT exits.)*

JENNA

Freak.

*(Enter LUCY, dressed to go home.)*

LUCY

Hi Jenna. You're still here? How's your first day of work been goin'?

JENNA

Well, so far I've managed to embarrass a senior partner, piss off my new boss, and fail to understand something called Standard Written Financial English. Oh, and as Marvin was so helpful to point out, wear the wrong color suit.

LUCY

Yeah, Marvin's at his best today.

JENNA

I guess I had a pretty rough day.

LUCY

I've been havin' lots of them lately too. I don't understand this place.

JENNA

Haven't you worked here a long time?

LUCY

Oh, yes, indeed. Thirty years, in fact. But there's been a lot of changin' of the guard here lately. Back when *Alphonsi* Pepsinetti ran this department—that was Frank Pepsinetti's dad—and Dacey Dawson was still in charge of the editors, I knew what it was I was supposed to do. Transcribe the analysts' verbal comments. That's it. That's what I did all day long. What do you think I went to secretarial school to type a hundred-fifty words a minute for? Then that idiot *Frank* Pepsinetti takes over after his dad kicked the bucket, and he promotes Brett up from Marketing, and Brett comes in here, gets Dacey fired so he can take over and change everything around, and he starts out with my job. With all the new analysts they keep hiring, I have to work ten-hour days just to get the comments done, Marvin sends me to the copy room every five minutes, and on top of all of that, Brett wants me to answer all his calls, super-alphabetize all his office supplies and when I ask him when is he going to hire me an assistant, he tells me that I don't need an assistant—I'm just disorganized. I'll *disorganize* him!

JENNA

Sounds like you're pretty frustrated.

LUCY

Frustrated ain't even the word for it, honey.

JENNA

Can I ask you something?

LUCY

Go right ahead.

JENNA

Do you think I'm cut out for this job?

LUCY

Brett may be a little off in the head—well, to tell you the truth, he's a lot off in the head—but I don't think he woulda hired you if you wasn't cut out for it. He ain't *that* crazy. Yet.

JENNA

I just feel like I'm screwing everything up—and it's only my first day.

LUCY

Lemme tell you something, Jenna. I don't think you screwed up here today at all. I'm not real well-educated like a lot of the folks around here, but there is one thing that I always recognize, and that's someone who's got decent sense. You sure got some of that.

JENNA

You think so?

LUCY

Oh, I know so. You're gonna go far here, girl. That is, you'll go far if you don't piss everybody off first.

JENNA

I think I've already pissed plenty of people off.

LUCY

Nobody who don't deserve it. I wish I had the guts to stand up to people like you do. Especially that Giovanni Guinness—that man is the biggest asswipe I've ever met. An' believe me that's saying something, 'cause asswipes are a dime a dozen in this business.

JENNA

Wow. I— Thank you, Lucy. You've made me feel a lot better.

LUCY

Don't you even mention it, sugar. Well, gotta catch my train. I live all the way out in Joliet, so I can't miss it or I won't be home till midnight!!

*(LUCY exits. JENNA goes back to her editing task for a moment, then quits in frustration. Instead she pulls an economics textbook off the shelf, opens it at random, and begins to read just as LOUIE enters, carrying a cup of coffee.)*

LOUIE

Hey folks. Did I miss anything good?

JENNA

*(Reading)* “The stock market crash of 1929 was brought about by a decade of excess and freewheeling fraud by brokers who operated like little more than organized criminals in a market with no government controls or consumer protections—

LOUIE

Yeah, yeah, no need to rub it in—

JENNA

*(Continuing Reading)* The Securities and Exchange Commission was created in 1933 to protect the public from fraud and to enact stiff trade regulations and penalties for violations to prevent another crash from happening.” Hmm. I never knew that.

LOUIE

Yeah. 1933 was a real bad year for guys in my racket. But don't worry folks, dey eventually figured out how to stay in business. Dere's still plenty of good rackets around LaSalle Street. Case in point right here.

*(LOUIE snaps his fingers twice. LIGHTS CROSSFADE to PEPSINETTI's office.)*

## ACT I; SCENE SEVEN

*(AT RISE: PEPSINETTI's office. GUINNESS and PEPSINETTI's conversation on the Sprockettwerks.com IPO continues.)*

GUINNESS

You don't realize just how lucky you are here in the States to have the Securities and Exchange Commission.

PEPSINETTI

Lucky my ass. All those government fellas do is make your life hell. At least that's what Papa always used to say.

GUINNESS

Compared to the regulators we have in Europe, the SEC is a child's clown parade. You Yanks don't appreciate your freedom because you take it for granted. You Yanks have an unrestricted market, corporate tax breaks galore, and you've cut the funding to your government enforcers so much that they can't even afford paperclips, let alone *monitor* anybody. The SEC is too small, too underfunded to even notice, say, a shell game here, bloated derivative transactions there, even a few extra kickbacks—and in the States, as long as people are making money, nobody will even ask any questions. So what do you say? Do we have a deal?

PEPSINETTI

Oh, you betcha, Gio. You betcha. Maybe I can finally get that Italian villa my wife's had her eye on.

GUINNESS

She'll have it. And more.

PEPSINETTI

B-but what if we get caught?

GUINNESS

Don't be ridiculous. It's just you and me here. Nobody else will ever know. Besides, in America, as long as you're making money, you're golden. That makes us the good guys, Frank. We're the good guys. And that's the best part.

*(LIGHTS SHIFT to LOUIE, who's been hiding in the shadows. GUINNESS and PEPSINETTI freeze.)*

LOUIE

Yeah, dat's what you think, Tightass. My quarterly review is comin' up wid da union, an' I really, really need to get outa dis here freakshow. Ya see folks, now dat Brenda Starr's showed up in da office, I seem to finally unnerstand what my purpose here is.

LOUIE, *Continued*

Back on my coffee break I had, what-you-call, a revelation. After seventy-five years shut up in here, I wanna get down to hell to see my gal Lucille. An' if I ever want a chance to see my gal Lucille, I'll hafta do something to stop dese thievin' maroons. I'm turnin' over a new leaf, folks. From now on, I'm goin' legit.

*(LIGHTS FADE OUT. END ACT I.)*

**ACT II; SCENE ONE**

*(AT RISE: Office of Stewart Spland and Company. Several months have gone by. It is now early 1996. The dot-com craze has hit Stewart Spland and Company. Actors are frozen in silhouette. At one end of the stage are BRETT, MARVIN, and JENNA. BRETT and MARVIN are immersed in copies of "Fortune" and "Chicago Social" while an extremely overworked JENNA is immersed in industry textbooks and report drafts. LUCY is in the background at her transcription machine, pencils in her hair and surrounded by huge stacks of files and boxes of office supplies. At the other end of the stage, PEPSINETTI, ANNETTE, and GUINNESS are in the Spland & Company boardroom reviewing a chart of the Dow Jones' spectacular growth over the past six months. With them are the Austrian DOT-COMMERS, all with super-trendy mid-90's clothing and gaudy hairstyles, holding cell phones and Palm Pilots.)*

LOUIE

Hey folks, welcome back. Did youse all smoke and pee okay? Good. Now see, some time has passed while youse was all still in da john. 'Bout six months, in fact. Here's da deal as far as I know it. The Research department here at Spland has latched onto Guinness' Sprockettwerks.com scammo thing like stink on limburger. Dis place is doin' more business, publishin' more reports than I have ever seen in all my years hauntin' dis dump. Don't matter none dat it's all phonybaloney scammo bullshit. Hey, I gotta tellya, some of dis stuff's even scammier dan da wildcat bank stuff we usta pull back in da 20s. An' of course, fer Guinness to be pull all dis scammo stuff off da way dat he is, 'course certain people round here gotta *work*.

*(LOUIE approaches JENNA and LUCY and snaps his fingers. JENNA and LUCY come out of their frozen silhouette for a few beats; JENNA works frantically on her reports while LUCY types at an impossible pace; LOUIE snaps his fingers again and they re-freeze.)*

LOUIE, *Continued*

On da other hand...

*(LOUIE motions toward BRETT and MARVIN, who remain frozen in silhouette behind their magazines.)*

LOUIE, *Continued*

‘Nuff said. An’ I’ve been gettin’ into serious trouble with da union ‘cause things are so crazy here. I haunt, an’ I haunt, but does anybody notice? Naw. I even got demoted last week. Can you believe dat? Now I’ll never get down to hell to see Lucille.

*(LIGHTS RISE in the boardroom. LOUIE crosses towards PEPSINETTI and GUINNESS and stands between them.)*

LOUIE, *Continued*

Take a look at da Dow Jones here. Now, I ain’t seen a bottom line go up like dat since I saw da entire chorus line of *No No Nanette* lose dere hobbleskirts at da Chicago Theatre back in ‘22. An’ what’s pushin’ it up, folks? Scammos. Dats right. The last time a Spland banker got as hyped up ‘bout scammos as dese crooks, he ended up dead. An’ hey, *I* deserved it.

*(LOUIE claps his hands and the meeting comes to life.)*

PEPSINETTI

Can you believe this chart here? It just keeps going up an’ up!

GUINNESS

Yes, Frank, it’s nice to know you actually understand that. Now can I get on with *my* part of the meeting—

PEPSINETTI

Nothin’s gone up this quick since way back when— and I LOVE it, baby!! *(Checks himself)* Oh, ah, excuse me.

GUINNESS

Yes, Frank, we do have some unique opportunities to make some amazing profits. Isn’t that right, *meinen Herren?*

*(The DOT-COMMERS ignore him and keep playing with their Palm Pilots and muttering in German.)*

PEPSINETTI

Yeah, this whole Internet sprocketty thing is really gonna to take off. I just got that whole Internet thing installed in my ahhhh...house.

ANNETTE

The *whole* Internet? Isn’t that a lot of stuff to just have in your house?

PEPSINETTI

Well, I don’t mean the actual thing. I mean, there really isn’t an actual...thing anywhere in the Internet. At least that’s my understanding of it—I really haven’t done much with it yet, but my kids sure as hell have...

GUINNESS

Yes, well. Ahem. Now if we could return to the subject of the meeting—

PEPSINETTI

You ever play that game “Pong”?

LOUIE

Somebody get dis guy a bromo seltzer.

GUINNESS

Let’s just talk about the share prices of Internet stocks, shall we? \$186 a share for Yahoo? It’s madness. And we’re here to cash in on that madness, right *meinen Herren?*

*(The DOT-COMMERS continue to play with their toys as if nothing is happening around them.)*

ANNETTE

Right. Um, I was wondering about that. They always taught us back in B-school never to recommend stocks with P/E ratios of more than 5. Yahoo’s P/E ratio is like, two thousand or something. Isn’t that like...bad?

LOUIE

Well, duh!

PEPSINETTI

It’s a brave new world we’re living in, Annette. Ain’t that right, Gio?

LOUIE

Brave new world. Yeah. We used to say da same thing ‘bout *radio*. Look what happened to *dat*.

GUINNESS

Anybody can make a killing in IPO market—it doesn’t matter what you do, or if you even do anything at all. The money just flies in.

PEPSINETTI

Right on. We’re all gonna get rich!!

*(GUINNESS makes a subtle motion for PEPSINETTI to shut up. PEPSINETTI just keeps rambling.)*

PEPSINETTI, *Continued*

Stewart Spland and the Research department’s gonna be the dot-commiest firm on LaSalle Street, I tellya. We’re talking robust, risky, *sexy* things—Like Sprockettwerks.com!! Oh, baby!

LOUIE

Forget da bromo seltzer folks. Dis guy needs a swift kick in da head.

*(LOUIE whacks PEPSINETTI on the side of the head to shut him up. PEPSINETTI rubs his temple, not sure of what has happened. )*

PEPSINETTI, *Continued*

Ow.

LOUIE

Thank God.

PEPSINETTI

What the? Something just hit me!

LOUIE

Yeah, somethin' just hit you! Me! Da ghost! Da Stewart Spland an' Company office ghost, folks! I'm RIGHT HERE!!

GUINNESS

Yes, yes, I'm sure it was just the wind or...or something.

LOUIE

Aw, come on. Cut a poor ghost a break, whydontchya?

GUINNESS

Well. At any rate, I am pleased to announce that my next stock industry report will aahh, *feature* the Austrian online petroleum supply-chain futures industry.

ANNETTE

Supply-chain futures? How is that possible? Gio, we didn't talk about this part—

GUINNESS

Derivatives, Annette darling. Anything's possible in the New Economy. And I recommend that Spland's investors get in on the ground floor. We do that by taking Sprockettwerks.com public as soon as we possibly can.

ANNETTE

They never taught us anything like this at Baylor.

PEPSINETTI

So, ahhh, tell everybody Gio, what does Sprockettwerks.com ahhh, do, exactly?

LOUIE

Nuttin'. They do nuttin', folks. An' dat's really da beauty of it.

GUINNESS

Well, their business model is in the earliest stages of development at this time, isn't that right, *meinen herren*?

*(DOT-COMMERS continue to ignore him while fiddling with their Palm Pilots.)*

GUINNESS, *Continued*

At this time, Sprockettwerks.com is developing a business model that will allow them to sell oil, among other things, on the Internet.

ANNETTE

What "other things", Gio?

LOUIE

Dogshit, pillowcases, hot air—

GUINNESS

Well, uh, uh—like I said before, derivatives. And ahhhh, sprockets. Hence their name, Sprockettwerks.com.

ANNETTE

What are the sprockets for?

GUINNESS

Ahhhhmmmm...well, they're ahhh...they're for, well they're for—

LOUIE

Nuttin'. Don't you folks get it? Sheesh.

PEPSINETTI

I'm sure Gio can fill us in on the all the details later. Just to let you know, ahhh, I have asked Miss Jenna Janson, our great little stock reports editor, to be your ahhhhh, special consultant...person.

GUINNESS

What? Now Frank, I thought you and I agreed that we would take care of this ourselves.

PEPSINETTI

Yeah, I know Gio, but I really think we could use Jenna's input on this. She has some very valuable experience with Austria and the ahhh...Austrians. Make a lunch date with her, willya?

GUINNESS

Well, that's a bit irregular, isn't it?

*(As if on cue, LOUIE steps out of his hiding place to make some mischief.)*

LOUIE

Aw, Christ. I can't take this crap from dese maroons no more. I need to make my quota today somehow.

*(LOUIE knocks the computer projector off its stand, breaking it. The Dow Jones chart disappears from the screen with a sad, slow flicker. All characters stare in wonder at what has happened.)*

LOUIE, *Continued*

An' it all comes tumblin' down, folks. Just like April '29.

GUINNESS

What the bloody hell just happened?

LOUIE

Ya got a ghost in here, folks! I'm tryin' to tell youse somethin' here!

PEPSINETTI

We really need to get that...ahhhh, ceiling vent thing fixed.

GUINNESS

Lucy, call the building people and have them fix it.

LOUIE

Ya see what I mean? I haunt an' I haunt, an' dey all think it's da ceiling vent. Jeez. No wonder I got demoted.

*(LIGHTS DOWN on boardroom.)*

## ACT II; SCENE TWO

*(AT RISE: JENNA JANSON still frozen in silhouette at her desk. The stress of working in the dot-com IPO boom is clearly getting to her—she should appear frazzled and gritty, and without the polish and pep she had in Act I. LOUIE walks over to her and looks over her shoulder.)*

LOUIE

It's real interesting to see what six months in dis here pressurecooker can do to somebody. Dis poor girl's at da end of her rope. She's a mess. No more Brenda Starr fer her. She's more like Felix da Kat now. Don't get me wrong—deep down, she's still the nice sweet girl youse all met earlier. But Spland tends to bring out da worst in people.

*(LOUIE snaps his fingers and releases JENNA from her freeze.)*



JENNA

*(Typing at a fever pitch)* God, I will never get this done. What is it about these goddamn stock analysts never using verbs in their reports? *(Checks her watch)* Fuck. Fuck fuck fuck fuckety fuck fuck fuck!

*(LOUIE snaps his fingers again; JENNA re-freezes.)*

LOUIE

Poor girl's got a bit of a language problem right now. Don't hold it against her, folks.

*(LOUIE snaps his fingers to once again to release JENNA from her freeze.)*

JENNA

FUUUUCK!!! Oh, I'm glad my mother didn't hear that. Oh, and this sentence doesn't even *have* a subject. Harvard MBA my ass. Bastard can't even spell a THREE LETTER WORD!! *(Checks her watch again)* He's going to be calling me.

*(As if on cue, SFX: her phone rings.)*

JENNA

Oh Jesus H. Christ. Good afternoon, this is Jenna. Yes, Mr. Pepsinetti. Yes, I did receive your earnings report on Yahoo. I didn't realize you still did those, what with your going-after-dotcom-IPOs like money's going out of style and all. No, I'm having a GREAT day! Well, your report has required a little more editing than these things usually do. No, no, I'm not criticizing your writing. How long? Well, my guess is at least another forty-five minutes. I'm sorry, but that's the best I can do. Bye-bye now. *(Hangs up phone.)* Dumb fucker.

*(Opposite JENNA, LUCY attempts to organize a mountain of files and supplies. As she does so, a huge pile of files falls to the ground, spilling papers everywhere, and when LUCY rushes to deal with the crash, she sends two boxes of offices supplies to the floor.)*

LUCY

*(Crossing herself)* Oh, I gotta remember to say my prayers today. Mother Mary, give me strength.

*(LOUIE reads the computer screen over JENNA's shoulder.)*

LOUIE

I guess I could try to make my quota in here. This girl's at least got half a brain left.

*(LOUIE loudly knocks some books off JENNA's shelves, but she is too engrossed in her work to notice. LOUIE makes even more noise in frustration, JENNA remains oblivious to his presence.)*

LOUIE, *Continued*

Hey! I'm workin' here! Helloooooo!!

*(JENNA looks up, shrugs her shoulders, and goes back to work.)*

LOUIE, *Continued*

Man, dis is ridiculous. I really need to go to da union about disese are some piss-poor working conditions goddamn it.

*(LIGHTS FADE OUT.)*

## ACT II; SCENE THREE

*(AT RISE: LUCY's office; early the next morning. Muttering to herself, LUCY is preparing coffee for the Editorial department.)*

LUCY

Exponential filing system my ass, Dr. Bean. I'll tell you where to put your...exponentials, Brett Bean. Paperclip-countin' freak—

*(Enter JENNA.)*

LUCY, *Continued*

Oh, Jenna, you scared me. Here I was, just floatin' around in my own little world.

JENNA

Oh, that's all right, Lucy. I know you're stressed out these days.

LUCY

*Stressed* ain't even the word. Have you ever seen a market like this? It's too crazy—I can't take any more of these 12-hour days.

JENNA

Bull markets like this are a rare blessing. At least that's what everybody says.

LUCY

You shoulda been here in the late 70s. Now that was a depressing time.

JENNA

I can't imagine. I was just a kid then.

LUCY

Oh, stop it, hon. Now you're making me feel old.

JENNA

Oh, I'm sorry. You're not old. You'll never be old.

LUCY

Sugar, you are just the sweetest thing. But days like today sure make me feel old. I've been here since 7 this morning, typing up the early comments so I can have enough time to reorganize the files for His Royal Highness Dr. Brett Bean before he rolls in at quarter to ten.

JENNA

Yeah, Brett's always late these days.

LUCY

He's on some kinda long-distance running routine. Been all the time braggin' in the coffee room about how he's running in the Chicago Marathon next month.

JENNA

Lots of people run the Chicago Marathon. And I'm sure most of them are still on time to work.

LUCY

Well, you know how he is. Boss's privilege. He'll probably paste his entry form on the wall next to his Ph.D. an' make people salute it whenever they walk into his office. (*JENNA laughs*) Well I gotta get back to these here Post-it Notes.

JENNA

Thanks for the coffee.

LUCY

Oh, you're welcome sweetheart. Aren't you working on that new IPO report with Big Man Gio Guinness?

JENNA

Yeah, I'm supposed to have a meeting about that today. The whole thing seems pretty fishy to me.

LUCY

It *smells* fishy, too. Who are all them foreign computer guys that were walkin' all around here yesterday with their pink hair an' nasty clothes? Now I haven't traveled anywhere, and I'm not real educated, but what in the hell are we doing giving those smelly pink-haired Austria people 82 million dollars so they can start this Sprocket-oil business or whatever it is on the computer? Did all our Corporate Finance people just go crazy, or what?

JENNA

Eighty-two million dollars? Where did you hear that?

LUCY

Well, I got here this morning and Mr. Giovanni Guinness left me a big stack of tapes on

my chair, and they were all about that. 82 million dollars this, 82 million dollars that. They're still on my chair there.

JENNA

Wait. Research analysts aren't supposed to have anything to do with Corporate Finance. That's—that's illegal. It's like, breaking the Chinese Wall.

LUCY

Well, I don't know nothing bout that—Chinese walls, Corporate Finance, purple bullshit—it's all the same to me, honey. I just type it.

JENNA

Wait a minute. So, what you're saying is, the Spland Research department is taking on the role of Corporate Finance and illegally putting up 82 million to launch a new company—Sprockettwerks.com. And then they're taking that brand-new company that hasn't even *done* anything—public?

LUCY

That sounds about right to me, sugar.

JENNA

That's really putting the cart before the horse. Even I know that, and I only majored in English.

*(Enter MARVIN.)*

MARVIN

What's going on in here?

JENNA

Lucy and I were just talking.

MARVIN

Lucy, you know that Brett doesn't want you socializing when you have work to do.

LUCY

But—

MARVIN

Get back to work. Jenna, leave Lucy to me.

JENNA

Marvin, Lucy reports to Brett, not to you.

MARVIN

Well, Brett's not here, and I will decide who Lucy reports to when Brett isn't here. And

you shouldn't be dilly-dallying, either. Don't you have a meeting or something?

*(JENNA exits silently, and shoots a sympathetic look to LUCY as she does. LUCY buries herself in a pile of supplies.)*

MARVIN

That's better. Wait, this isn't the Mountain Blend. This is the Café Mocha. Where's the Mountain Blend, Lucy?

LUCY

We ran out of Mountain Blend yesterday. I ordered some more—it'll be here next week.

MARVIN

Well, you should have ordered it sooner.

LUCY

Well, there is only so much I can do here, Marvin—

MARVIN

Just get back to work.

*(MARVIN picks up the morning's Financial Times from the counter and leans against a desk reading nonchalantly as LUCY slaves away.)*

MARVIN

Oh, look at that. Alcatel shares are up in early European trading.

LUCY

*(Under her breath)* That ain't all that's up this morning.

## ACT II; SCENE FOUR

*(AT RISE: BRETT's office; BRETT and MARVIN HILL are meeting. BRETT is meticulously assembling a lattice structure with his pencils.)*

BRETT

We have a problem, Marvin.

MARVIN

What's that?

BRETT

Jenna is beginning to upstage us. Big time.

MARVIN

Well, I've only been trying to tell you that since the day she started.

BRETT

Fine. You were right.

MARVIN

What do *you* think she's doing to upstage us?

BRETT

Since you know so much, why don't you tell me?

MARVIN

I want to hear your side of things.

BRETT

That's a change for you.

MARVIN

Oh, I'm just expanding my horizons. Tell me what's on your mind, Brett.

BRETT

First of all, Jenna's been here barely six months, and already Pepsinetti is having her consult on IPO reports. That's *partner-level* work! I never get asked to do anything like that.

MARVIN

You still make twice the money that she does. Take heart in that. They've got her working for a pittance.

BRETT

Somehow, that doesn't make me feel any better.

*(LIGHTS CROSSFADE to GIO GUINNESS' office where GIO and ANNETTE are having a spat.)*

ANNETTE

I just don't see why I have to be involved with you this way. I want out!

GUINNESS

You can't get out now, Annette darling. You're knee-deep already. Deep enough, anyway— *(Lunges for her)*

ANNETTE

Stop it! I'm turning over a new leaf. Research only, strictly business. I don't care if I never get promoted. I don't care if I have to quit and start at the bottom at some other

firm. From now on I am only going to help you with work that is completely “on the level.”

GUINNESS

We can be “on the level” right here on the desktop, darling...

ANNETTE

If you try that one more time I swear I will report you to HR.

GUINNESS

And what would HR do? I’m an internationally famous senior partner who is bringing millions to this firm, and you are just a trophy-wife research associate. Who do you think they’ll believe?

ANNETTE

Millions, huh? Please. You’re a scam artist. People are starting to figure out what you’re up to. If I can figure it out, so can other people. And that’s going to be a problem for you.

GUINNESS

Oh, there’s no problem, Annette darling. It’s a perfectly sound little “investment” opportunity. Now just be a nice girl and do as I say—

ANNETTE

No!

*(LIGHTS CROSSFADE back to BRETT BEAN’s office.)*

MARVIN

You have no people skills, Brett. That’s exactly what’s keeping you down around the office.

BRETT

No people skills, huh? Well, I don’t think so. I think *I* am the best judge of what is oppressing me. And it’s Jenna. Jenna and her winning smile, Jenna and her fluent German and Esperanto, Jenna and her flat shoes—I just need some guidance here, Marvin. I can’t afford to make any mistakes right now. You know I want to make partner before I’m 36.

MARVIN

Editors can’t be partners, Brett.

BRETT

There’s a first time for everything.

MARVIN

Don't get your hopes up.

BRETT

They made the guy who runs the mailroom a partner, didn't they? So why not me?

MARVIN

They only did that because he let that retard Stewart Spland III marry his youngest daughter.

BRETT

Oh, that was just a wild rumor.

MARVIN

Can you think of a better reason? I mean, the guy licks stamps all day long.

*(BRETT's pencil lattice falls apart.)*

BRETT

Oh, damn it all to hell. I tried to get in on that consult with Guinness, but Pepsinetti edged me out. It's not fair they gave it to Jenna and not to me. I mean, I came up with Standard Written Financial English, goddamn it!

MARVIN

So Jenna's in Guinness' office right now?

BRETT

Not yet. The meeting's in a few minutes.

MARVIN

We could do something about that, you know.

*(LIGHTS CROSSFADE to JENNA JANSEN's office. LUCY has just brought JENNA a stack of files.)*

JENNA

Oh Lucy, thank you so much. What would I do without you?

LUCY

Probably the same thing everybody else does.

JENNA

I promise I'll never stop appreciating you, Lucy.

LUCY

You're such a sweetheart, honey. So whatcha gonna do with that stuff? Gimme the dirt.

JENNA

I better not. I don't want to blow my cover.

LUCY

This is so exciting. You're like some kinda hi-fi spy woman.

JENNA

Maybe I am, Lucy. Thanks again.

*(LIGHTS CROSSFADE to BRETT BEAN's office.)*

BRETT

What exactly did you have in mind?

MARVIN

Perhaps a creative use of e-mail? Give me that stupid language manual of yours. This has got to be good for *something*.

BRETT

Don't insult my language paradigm—wait. You actually want to *use* Standard Written Financial English? Oh Marvin, you don't know how much that means to me—

MARVIN

Shut up, Brett. We're not writing a dissertation here. *(Flipping pages)* Where the hell is that one section—

BRETT

What are you going to do?

MARVIN

You'll see.

BRETT

This is such a great day for me, Marvin. And an even greater day for Standard Written Financial English. I hope you realize that.

MARVIN

Yeah yeah yeah. Now let's just get started...

*(LIGHTS OUT.)*

## ACT II; SCENE FIVE

*(AT RISE: GUINNESS' office; GUINNESS, ANNETTE, and JENNA going over the*

*Sprockettwerks.com preliminary IPO report.*)

JENNA

Now if you'll turn to page 28, I'd like to draw your attention to a passage I found particularly problematic—

GUINNESS

How dare you insult my work!

JENNA

I'm not insulting you personally, Gio. I'm just trying to point out some obvious weaknesses in your IPO document here.

GUINNESS

I never asked you to come to this meeting, you know. That idiot Pepsinetti—

ANNETTE

Mr. Pepsinetti is a very nice man.

JENNA

Well, Gio, I think I would agree with you that Pepsinetti is not the sharpest knife in the drawer, but—

GUINNESS

Really? You agree with me? See, *she* agrees with me, Annette.

JENNA

Well, just on that one point. But let me go on with what I was saying

ANNETTE

Gio, why don't you ask her what you were asking me about the regulations regarding offers of European companies' shares in the U.S. market? She ought to know a lot about that. Unlike *you*—all you ever think of is sex—.

GUINNESS

Perhaps I should call your husband and ask him what *he* thinks of Pepsinetti.

ANNETTE

Don't drag my husband into this, please...

JENNA

Umm, have I come at a bad time?

GUINNESS

No no no, not at all. Please stay.

ANNETTE

Yes, Jenna, actually would you mind coming back a little later—we're kind of having a—*a disconnect* right now...

GUINNESS

No we're not. We're just a little tense over the spat we had this morning over the top-secret deal you seem so intent on destroying for me. . .

ANNETTE

Well, it won't be top-secret for long if you keep blabbing your mouth like that.

GUINNESS

Well, that wouldn't matter if you and Pepsinetti had insisted on bringing this little nosey Nancy butting in to all my plans—

ANNETTE

*Your* plans! You've dragged me into your whole illegal...illegal...*Ponzi*— or whatever kind of scheme you call it—

JENNA

ALL RIGHT!!

*(GUINNESS and ANNETTE are stunned silent.)*

JENNA, *Continued*

Now. I don't know what's going on between you two, or between Gio and Mr. Pepsinetti, or between Annette and Mr. Pepsinetti, or you and Annette's husband, or whatever, and I don't really care to know. But right now, I want the both of you to sit down and listen to ME.

GUINNESS

Or what?

JENNA

Or I'll—or I'll go to the media about your whole illegal Ponzi scheme.

GUINNESS

Is that supposed to scare me? Because, and pardon me, Jenna Janson, you wouldn't know a Ponzi scheme if one walked up right up to you and took a shite on your shoe.

ANNETTE

Oh, just leave her alone, Gio. We're sorry, Jenna.

GUINNESS

No we're not.

JENNA

Okay—let’s just look at page 28, where you talk about all the reasons why Stewart Splant & Company should invest all this venture capital—82 million dollars is my understanding—

GUINNESS

Where did you hear that?

JENNA

Oh, a little bird told me. Anyway, you talk here about why we should give Sprockettwerks.com all that money and why we should be the ones to launch the IPO, despite the fact that this company hasn’t even *done* anything yet. . .

GUINNESS

Yes. I consider the words on that page among the best work of my career.

JENNA

Well, I would have to disagree with that point, Gio. What you have written here is nothing but smoke and mirrors. It doesn’t mean anything. It’s just a bunch of empty rhetoric designed to mislead people.

GUINNESS

I wouldn’t go that far.

ANNETTE

See, I told you it wouldn’t work. I told you people would figure it out. Didn’t I tell you?

GUINNESS

Oh why don’t you just shut it, Annette?

ANNETTE

I’ll say whatever I please, you—you British ass-grabbing bastard—

GUINNESS

Now that is just uncalled for—

JENNA

Why don’t you both just SIT DOWN let me read you something. (*Flips to a page*) “It is our sincere belief that given the low barriers to entry in this market and the low overhead of Internet-based companies, buyers of the initial public offering are virtually guaranteed strong returns on their initial investment.” Would you care to tell me exactly what that means, Mr. Guinness?

GUINNESS

It means just what it says.

JENNA

It doesn't *say* anything at all.

ANNETTE

How do you know that? I mean, how can you tell?

JENNA

Let me just break it down for you. "Given the low barriers to entry in this market and the low overhead of Internet-based companies..." blah blah blah. Doesn't "low barriers to entry" just mean that any idiot with fifty bucks and a two-bit website can start up, say, an *international oil distribution company* in his garage?

GUINNESS

Well, what I meant to say there was, that ahh that is I ahhh—well, just that this is a company that will ramp up into the market rather quickly, and ahhh, that it won't take long for investors to start seeing a return...or a new Website...

JENNA

Okay, so basically you think a company that operates in a nonexistent market and uses technology you don't even understand is going to be a good investment? Do you really expect people to be stupid enough to believe that?

GUINNESS

Well, naturally.

JENNA

Bull. Mr. Pepsinetti asked me to read the report and make a recommendation to him based on my own knowledge, and I'm going to make a negative recommendation. That guy is so dumb, somebody's gotta clue him in he could go to jail for twenty years if he signs off on something like this.

GUINNESS

Really. You really think so, Jenna?

JENNA

I can't in good conscience recommend in a public document that Spland sponsor an initial public offering of stock in this obviously worthless company. Surely you can see why.

ANNETTE

(*Guiltily*) The report's already been made public, actually.

JENNA

What? When? On whose authority?

GUINNESS

The authorization came through thanks to Brett Bean. He just sent out this nice little legalese email here, about twenty minutes ago, saying that the report had been approved by Compliance. He rushed it through just for us. Copies are already available in Printing. So much for your little morality play, Jenna.

JENNA

What? How—

ANNETTE

I thought Brett would have told you right before you came over here, since that's when it came out.

JENNA

No. Nobody. Wait—what would even be the purpose of me consulting on the content of a report if it was already published?

GUINNESS

Well, there wouldn't be any purpose in that at all, now would there, Miss Jensen?

JENNA

It's *Jansen*. But—

GUINNESS

I think your work is done here. Good day.

JENNA

Well. Good day then.

GUINNESS

*(As JENNA exits)* Oh, I just love toying with the worker bees. It gets me hot.

*(JENNA walks dejectedly back to her office and puts her face in her hands. As she is walking she passes the DOT-COMMERS, who show no signs of noticing her.)*

JENNA

I wish I were like you guys. Your lives are so simple. When things don't go your way you just play with your Palm Pilots and everything's all right.

*(LIGHTS OUT.)*

**ACT II; SCENE SIX**

*(AT RISE: LUCY walking down the hallway expertly balancing a pile of file folders on her head as she carries reams of copy paper, a Xerox color toner cartridge, and assorted office supplies loaded under each arm. Enter PEPSINETTI carrying a hot cup of coffee and walking backwards while talking to an offstage secretary.)*

PEPSINETTI

Yeah, Daisy, just call the *Financial Times* and tell them to drop on by my office about that ahhh—thing—ahhh, the article thing about the Dot-Com IPO thingeys. Yeah, just tell the temp agency I'll need you for another week. And one more thing—

*(Just as LUCY is about to make it into her office, PEPSINETTI backs into her knocking all her supplies to the floor. He quickly turns towards her spilling the coffee cup on her, soaking her with steaming liquid. LUCY strains not to scream in pain.)*

PEPSINETTI, *Continued*

Oh, hi Lucy. When you get done with your...little coffee break there, would you mind typing these up for me?

*(PEPSINETTI tosses her two microcassettes and exits.)*

LUCY

Why me, Lord? Is this your idea of a joke or somethin'?

*(LIGHTS DOWN.)*

## ACT II; SCENE SEVEN

*(AT RISE: GUINNESS and ANNETTE in GUINNESS' office, climbing up from behind GUINNESS' desk. Their clothes are noticeably rumpled, and GUINNESS' desk is in strange disarray.)*

GUINNESS

Well, that was productive, I think.

ANNETTE

I swear to God if you try that again I am calling the police.

GUINNESS

So what? I'll just place a few calls to your husband and it will be bye-bye Giant Diamonds and Designer Suits. Don't they have a name for girls like you here? "Lincoln Park Trixie," is it?

ANNETTE

Fine. You win. I'll do whatever you say—just don't call my husband. Please. I guess

you need me to find the rest of those figures for the Sprockettwerks deal?

GUINNESS

No, I'd really rather you didn't.

ANNETTE

What?

GUINNESS

Well, since you seem to think it's nothing but a Ponzi scheme, I can hardly have you dig up important numbers for me, can I?

ANNETTE

But it *is* a Ponzi scheme! You said so yourself. A sham—just a shitty company stock that will give us kickbacks, make a bunch of money at the offering, and then sink.

GUINNESS

That's the problem, Annette. I think you understand it a little too well. You're much more intelligent than I ever gave you credit for. It's really rather unfortunate.

ANNETTE

*What?*

GUINNESS

And you're hardly known round this office for your tact, especially with that Rock of Gibraltar you drag round on your finger there. So you can see why I can't risk having you in on this. You'd just blow our cover.

ANNETTE

But—but our cover is already blown. And—and you said I'd get a share of the kickbacks too—

GUINNESS

Oh no, dear. I'm afraid all I can offer now you is my silence about our affair.

ANNETTE

There's no affair!

GUINNESS

There is if I say there is.

ANNETTE

But—

GUINNESS

I'll let you keep your job, of course. Unless you don't want it anymore. Your fat little

trophy husband could always just pay your bills for you.

ANNETTE

But—

GUINNESS

I'm sorry, Annette. I really am. Now would you mind filing these charts for me? I know it's not really in your job description, but do it anyway. *(Exits)*

ANNETTE

Fuck you, Gio.

*(ANNETTE crumples a paper into her fist and then exits with a purpose. LIGHTS OUT.)*

## ACT II; SCENE EIGHT

*(AT RISE: Back to the boardroom. GUINNESS and PEPSINETTI are having a meeting about the Sprockettwerks.com IPO. The DOT-COMMERS are there, playing paddleball and paying little attention to the meeting.)*

PEPSINETTI

All right Gio, let me see if I have this straight. So thanks to Brett and Marvin's little Compliance workaround— thing-y, we can go ahead with the dot-commie deal thing without getting into any trouble.

GUINNESS

Right.

PEPSINETTI

I'm thinking that with the pre-purchase price for those clients stupid enough, nudge-nudge-wink-wink, to pay the extra kickbacks an' get in on the deal, we'll actually make about \$42 per share profit. And it all goes straight into our pockets, hot damn. Then it'll shoot up to \$90 or so since it's one of those cool dot-commie things, making you guys a pretty nice haul there, *(DOT-COMMERS do high-fives)*, and—what happens then Gio?

GUINNESS

Well, *meinen herren*, once you all cash in your own shares, you can just let your little “company” slowly dissolve. The stock will fall until it is delisted from the NASDAQ, and then you'll just close up shop and that will be that. The whole process will take about three years. Sound fine?

*(DOT-COMMERS murmur an agreement in German as they play paddleball gleefully. Enter LOUIE, carrying a clipboard and pen.)*

PEPSINETTI

Sounds great to me. As long as you still think we ahhhh, can get away with it.

GUINNESS

Oh, we will.

LOUIE

Hey folks. Did I miss anything good? I kinda got tied up for a while dere with my union steward.

GUINNESS

And let us give our thanks to Jenna, who sort of indirectly allowed for all this to happen quickly. That girl is so bloody naïve she couldn't taste defeat even when it hit her in the arse. And since Marvin and Brett hate her so much that they're brewing their own soap opera schemes against her—we don't even have to bribe Compliance to push it through ourselves. Beautiful, isn't it?

LOUIE

Hoo boy. Looks like I did miss somethin' good.

PEPSINETTI

Are you sure Brett and Marvin don't know what you and I are up to?

GUINNESS

Certainly not. They're too busy with their own schemes.

PEPSINETTI

Good, good. Never did like that Brett Bean much. Walks around like his butt cheeks are sewn together.

LOUIE

You ain't da only one.

GUINNESS

Yes, well, that's probably not an image we need to be spreading round, is it? So, what was your motivation for sending Jenna over to read the report? That girl's been getting a little too big for her girdle round here.

PEPSINETTI

Well, I thought she could be of some help to you. You know, with all her ahhhh, Austria stuff that she ahhh, has. I really oughta take her out to dinner sometime. To the top of the Hancock, even. I bet a nice small-town girl like her would like that—

LOUIE

Nice small-town girls don't like to drink Pepsinetti, if ya know what I mean.

GUINNESS

You have her pegged all wrong, Frank. Jenna has bloody “whistleblower” practically tattooed to her forehead.

PEPSINETTI

What are you saying there, Gio?

GUINNESS

Sack her, or you and I might have to kiss this deal goodbye. She’s a Salvation Army type, always on some moral crusade or other. She might even alert the media.

LOUIE

Hmph. Wish I could alert da media.

PEPSINETTI

Well, can’t say as I have the heart to can the girl. We don’t really fire people here. What we do when we want to get rid of someone is just make their lives here so miserable that they up and quit, and then—ahhh, it ain’t our problem anymore. Makes the lawyers happy.

LOUIE

Least it makes somebody happy. Dumbass.

*(LIGHTS OUT.)*

## ACT II; SCENE NINE

*(AT RISE: JENNA sitting at her desk, her head down, rubbing her temples. LUCY enters carrying the pile of files and supplies. She is still soaked in hot coffee. LUCY throws the disarrayed office supplies onto the floor violently.)*

JENNA

*(Looking up)* Oh my God. What happened to you, Lucy?

LUCY

Aww, now that’s it. I just can’t freakin’ take it here no more. Thirty years of slaving for this dump an’ what do I get ? I get to wear a pot of Sanka, that’s what.

JENNA

*(Grabbing some tissues)* Here, let me help.

LUCY

It was that goddamn idiot Pepsinetti. He—He, oh, I can't even discuss it!

JENNA

Oh my goodness. I've never seen you so angry.

LUCY

You bet your sweet hell I am! But not at you, sweetie.

JENNA

Are you okay? Are you like, burned or anything?

LUCY

Oh, I think it'll be all right. But this dress is ruined.

JENNA

Looks like we're both having a bad day.

LUCY

Aww, honey. Not you, too! What happened?

JENNA

Well, let's see. Pepsinetti sent me in to "consult" on Gio's report only so I could be humiliated. Brett and Marvin seem hell-bent on sabotaging me, which they basically just did—that's pretty much how I just *got* humiliated—and now—oh, I don't even want to go on.

LUCY

Aww, sugar. . .

JENNA

Oh, there's more. I just got a memo from Brett here on how I'm only going to be given small copyediting projects now. Marvin is taking over all research projects. What a crock—Marvin doesn't even *do* anything, except yell at people all the time.

LUCY

You've got that right. So the big BM is getting to you, too?

JENNA

The, *(Giggles)*, what?

LUCY

The big BM. Brett and Marvin. That's what I always call those two when they're

pissing me off.

JENNA

More like the Big Diarrhea today.

LUCY

What—oh, yeah. (*Laughs*)

(*Enter ANNETTE, looking crushed.*)

LUCY

Annette, honey, what's the matter? You look like your dog just got run over.

ANNETTE

Worse.

JENNA

What?

ANNETTE

Oh, well, you know. It's always the same here around the office. I have one little affair with the head of the department four years ago, and then all the other big shots just assume I am the office whore. I am not the office whore. I don't know what I am anymore, exactly, but I'm *not* the office whore!

LUCY

Of course you're not, honey. You're a nice girl.

ANNETTE

I don't want to be a nice girl. I want what I do to *mean* something. Nothing in my life means anything.

LUCY

Aw, now you don't mean that, sugar.

ANNETTE

Yes I do! I hate this job, I hate my parents, I hate the country club, I hate my boss, I can't stand my husband—I hate this gaudy fucking engagement ring—

(*ANNETTE pulls off her wedding band set and throws it on the ground.*)

ANNETTE

I need a change.

JENNA

We all need a change.

ANNETTE

I just can't take it here anymore—

LUCY

None of us can. I mean look at me, for God's sake. I look like I took a bath at Starbucks. I swear to God, this place has turned into a regular two-headed cow show.

ANNETTE

All my life I've just been doing what everybody told me I was supposed to—Mom and Dad always said, money was the answer. You know, go to the right school, marry well, do whatever you have to at work to get ahead—and now, I just don't know anything anymore. All the stuff that I was supposed to do to be happy just makes me hate myself. I hate myself.

LUCY

I hate this job.

JENNA

Ladies, look. It doesn't have to be this way. We can do something about this. The three of us are all scraping the bottom of the fish barrel in this office. We have nothing to lose.

LUCY

Except our jobs.

JENNA

Oh, screw our jobs. We can get new jobs.

LUCY

Maybe you can. I'm as old as the hills, here. Nobody'll hire me.

JENNA

Oh, Lucy, that's not true. How many people can type as fast as you can? You could get something new in a week's time. Just a few minutes ago you were saying how you can't take this place anymore. We don't have to put up with this. Now, I think I have a plan on what we can do. . .

*(LIGHTS FADE OUT as JENNA gathers LUCY and ANNETTE to discuss their plans.)*

## ACT II; SCENE TEN

*(AT RISE: Offices of Stewart Spland & Company, after hours. LOUIE is splayed out on a desk in his pajamas, sleeping. LUCY, ANNETTE, and JENNA, trying to break into the office, rattle the door startling LOUIE, whom they cannot see. LOUIE jumps off the desk, sending papers and pencils flying, and a computer keyboard onto the floor.)*

LOUIE

What in da name o' Sam Hill? It's too late for da maid service. Old Maid Quimby? Is dat you? I'll report you to the union if youse up here— it's against union rules to haunt other people's territory! Go back to hauntin' yer law firm.

*(LUCY, ANNETTE, and JENNA pile through the door all at once.)*

LUCY

I knew there was a reason I still use bobby pins.

LOUIE

Bobby pins? Oh, my gal Lucille usta use dose.

ANNETTE

How did you use a bobby pin against a magnetically sealed security door?

LUCY

Nothin' stands a chance against a good bobby pin. Guess you young girls with your big banana clips and scrunchies just don't get that.

JENNA

So, what do we do first?

LUCY

They keep the mainframe computers and the stock tickers down here. And all the confidential Corporate Finance files, too.

ANNETTE

How do you know that?

LUCY

Honey, you type comments for every big shot who works here and load up boxes full of files for long enough, you get to know some secrets. I've even got a key. C'mon.

LOUIE

Wait a sec—wait just one second. I think I see an opportunity here. Lucille, baby, I'm comin' to see ya real soon!

*(LOUIE exits. LIGHTS SHIFT to indicate the THREE WOMEN have entered another room where a large, old mainframe-type computer server and stacks of file drawers can be seen in the dim light.)*

LUCY

Here we go. I can't believe they still use this ol' ugly thing to store all the computer data. It's almost as old as I am.

ANNETTE

They really haven't changed those old trading computers since the eighties?

LUCY

Nope. An' I still know how to mess 'em up. See? I'll just type "Options Trading" three times in the Account Balance field an' then hit "Return" twice. *(She does)*

*(The mainframe computer begins to shake and squeal as if it is in pain.)*

LUCY, *Continued*

Still works! We used to do that to the local terminals for fun back about ten years ago when the market was crashing. Jammed 'em every time! I always wondered what it would do if I did it to the mainframe, though. I swear, I can't believe the whole system still runs on this hunk o' junk.

*(LUCY kicks the mainframe in the side; it continues to beep and squeal.)*

ANNETTE

Wow, you broke it, Lucy!

LUCY

No, it'll just be down for a day or two. They'll fix it—but not in time to make that big fake 82-million-dollar deal!

JENNA

What next?

ANNETTE

The Sprockettwerks IPO files. I have all of them up in my office. Gio and Frank—they're really up to something bad. I mean, I know it'll make a lot of money and all,

but—

JENNA

But they're only breaking every federal securities law ever enacted. The ends don't justify the means.

ANNETTE

The sad thing is, they'll probably get away with it anyway.

LUCY

Not if we have something to do with it. It's payback time, ladies. What are we gonna do with those files, Annette?

ANNETTE

Maybe we could—turn them over to the authorities?

JENNA

Well, we could do that, or we could *really* shake up the office. Go out with a bang. Lucy, do you still have that paper shredder by your desk?

LUCY

You know it. And I'm just itching to shred something.

JENNA

Let's split up. Annette, get the files. I'll start the shredding. Lucy, can you look up some phone numbers for me? The Federal Trade Commission, the Federal Reserve—You know I think I graduated with someone who works over at the *Sun-Times* now...

*(LIGHTS FADE. LOUIE comes in slowly and overhears the LADIES' conversation. He is hiding something behind his back.)*

LOUIE

Aw, ladies, youse are all real sweet to do this an' all, but I know from all my years of sleepin' down here dat dis old mainframe can fix itself in 'bout ten minutes.

*(The mainframe computer stops making noise and slowly returns to normal.)*

LOUIE, *Continued*

Ya see dat folks? Now, if ya really wanna screw things up, ya gotta do it like we did back in the 20s.

*(LOUIE takes a jug of grain alcohol and some matches from behind his back.)*

LOUIE, *Continued*

The great thing 'bout grain alcohol is, it don't leave a trace behind. It'll just look like an electrical fire.

*(LOUIE pours the grain alcohol onto the mainframe computer as LIGHTS begins to fade.)*

LOUIE, *Continued*

Yer welcome, ladies.

*(BLACKOUT as LOUIE strikes a single match.)*

## ACT II; SCENE ELEVEN

*(AT RISE: The next morning. The offices of Stewart Spland are in a complete uproar over a major computer crash and office fire. GUINNESS, PEPSINETTI, BRETT, and MARVIN are on opposite sides of the stage trying to make sense of it all. THE DOT-COMMERS are playing keep-away with some office supplies. GUINNESS is on the telephone, frantic.)*

GUINNESS

Are you absolutely sure? Are you positive? So there's no getting those files back. Bloody bugging hell. Yes, you have a nice day, too.

PEPSINETTI

So what's up?

GUINNESS

The mainframe computer has—caught fire. Spland's bottom two floors are completely destroyed. All the Sprocketwerks files we saved on the J drive are gone. Vanished!

PEPSINETTI

So uhhhhh—what does that mean?

GUINNESS

It means that we can't file the Sprocketwerks.com IPO before the deadline on Friday. We won't have time to recreate all those documents.

*(The DOT-COMMERS stop their play abruptly.)*

PEPSINETTI

No dot-commie IPO? No big money? No—nothing?

GUINNESS

Well, not until the next quarterly filing deadline, at least. The earliest we could do it now would be March 1<sup>st</sup>.

PEPSINETTI

Well—ahhhh—shit, Gio. I already made a down payment on my new Italian villa! Oh jeez, my wife is gonna kill me...

GUINNESS

Pull yourself together, Frank. We'll just have to put our Italian villas on hold until we can create all that paperwork again. We might as well get started...Wait a minute. Where's Annette?

PEPSINETTI

Annette?

GUINNESS

You know, Annette. The office bimbo receptacle? She's the only one who has hard copies of those documents. Where the hell is she? It's after 10. Annette? ANNETTE!!

*(LIGHTS CROSSFADE to BRETT and MARVIN in their office. They are rummaging through documents in desperate search of the Sprockettwerks IPO report and their Standard Written Financial English manuals.)*

MARVIN

The reports! They're not here!!

BRETT

How can they not be here? I left them out on my desk before I left last night.

MARVIN

Well, they're gone now. Why would you leave that Sprockettwerks report on your desk? You never leave anything on your desk overnight.

BRETT

I know. I usually like things to be completely pristine, but these—well, I was just so proud of them I couldn't bring myself to put them out of sight.

MARVIN

Well, they're really out of sight now.

BRETT

Without the report—well I suppose we could always try to dig up another copy—

MARVIN

There are no more copies. They're gone.

*(BRETT checks some bookshelves.)*

BRETT

All the copies of my style manual are gone, too! All of them!

MARVIN

Standard Written Financial English is no more?

BRETT

And without any copies of that report, and without my beautiful, beautiful manuals—

MARVIN

There's no proof you and I saved Guinness' ass with Standard Written Financial English. I know, I know. So much for *your* life's work and *my* career.

BRETT

Guinness doesn't even know that we saved his ass! Nobody does!

MARVIN

We're going to look like idiots.

BRETT

How will we look like idiots? Nobody even knew what we were doing.

MARVIN

My point exactly. Nobody *ever* knows what we're doing.

BRETT

Where's Jenna? Did she call in sick or something?

MARVIN

Who cares? Let's just figure out if we can salvage any of this.

*(LIGHTS CROSSFADE back to GUINNESS' office, which is littered with shredded documents. GUINNESS is unsuccessfully trying to find what's left of the Sprockettwerks.com IPO files. PEPSINETTI paces nervously, while the subdued DOT-COMMERS twiddle around with their electronic devices.)*

GUINNESS

Oh my God.

*(GUINNESS holds up the shredded documents.)*

GUINNESS

Shredded. Every last page. It's a conspiracy. Bloody female conspiracy. ANNETTE!!!! Where are you? I need you—ANNETTE!!

PEPSINETTI

She ain't here, Gio.

GUINNESS

The time for the Final Analysis has come.

PEPSINETTI

You sure you're all right there Gio?

GUINNESS

Am I all right? Are *you* all right? We've just lost months of work on a lucrative and highly illegal deal and you are standing there asking me if I'm all right. You are an absolutely preposterous man, do you know that Frank?

PEPSINETTI

I'm sorry, Gio. It's just ahhh—I'm no good in a crisis you know—I just sorta shit myself when stuff like this happens.

GUINNESS

(*Sniffing*) Well, obviously. Where is that insolent woman who transcribes all the cassettes—what's her name again?

PEPSINETTI

Lucy Leaver.

GUINNESS

Yes, yes, yes, Lucy. She created most of those documents from tapes I dictated. If she still has the tapes, we could—we could recreate the files—

PEPSINETTI

Then we could still make the IPO filing on time? And make the big money??

GUINNESS

Righto. Let's find those tapes!

(*LOUIE comes out from behind a filing cabinet and watches PEPSINETTI and GUINNESS rush offstage.*)

LOUIE

Ya know, one o' the things I missed da most after I died was bein' able to go to the picture show every week to see da *Keystone Kops*. It's real nice to see that kinda high-quality comedy right here in the office.

(*LIGHTS CROSSFADE to BRETT AND MARVIN. BRETT is sitting staring at the floor in humiliation. MARVIN is flipping through a stack of file folders.*)

BRETT

What are you doing?

MARVIN

I stole these files from Jenna's desk yesterday.

BRETT

What's in them?

MARVIN

Nothing we can use. Just a bunch of crap by left-wing kooks on how the dot-com IPO boom is nothing but a ruse.

BRETT

The biggest bull market in history a ruse. Ha! I'll never understand where those commie pinkos get their ideas. So Jenna's still not here yet?

MARVIN

Nope. Neither is Lucy. And Lucy's desk is all cleaned out.

*(Enter a frantic GUINNESS, followed by PEPSINETTI and the DOT-COMMERS.)*

GUINNESS

Where's Lucy Leaver? I need to see her immediately.

MARVIN

She's not here.

GUINNESS

Well, where the devil is she?

BRETT

We don't know.

GUINNESS

Oh, Good God. What about that little twit editor, Jenna? Surely she's hiding round here somewhere.

BRETT

She's not here either.

GUINNESS

What the bloody hell is going on in this office? Have all the harpies just flown the coop with everything I've worked on for the past six months?

PEPSINETTI

Yeah, kinda looks that way.

*(GUINNESS exits in a hurry. PEPSINETTI and the DOT-COMMERS watch him, startled.)*

MARVIN

What is the matter with everyone today? And why are these smelly Austrians in here? Get out. Get out! Take a bath.

*(The DOT-COMMERS ignore him.)*

PEPSINETTI

Well, we have ahhhh—a situation. Seems there was some kind of ahhh—computer meltdown and we ahhhh—sort of lost everything we needed to close a deal. The deal with these guys ahhh, here. Yeah.

*(The DOT-COMMERS look extremely nervous.)*

**This is Not the End of the Play**  
**Ending Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes**

Continue to Next Page for Early Production History

## EARLY PRODUCTION HISTORY

*Developed in part at **Chicago Dramatists** (multiple dramaturgical reviews—2002-2004;*

*Reading, **Chicago Dramatists First Draft Series**, October 25, 2005)*

*Developed in part at **Stage Left Theatre's** (Chicago Illinois) **Downstage Left Play***

*Development Program (November 2002—2 public staged readings)*

*Developed in part at **Women's Theatre Alliance** 2002 **New Plays Development Workshop** (**June 2002**: dramaturgy and 1 public staged reading)*