

At rise NEIL STEDMAN is reading from a piece of paper. HE is dressed casually. HE wads the paper and goes to the refrigerator. HE takes out a six pack of beer. HE takes out one and throws the rest on the couch. HE crosses over and sits at the desk. HE takes a drink out of the bottle of beer. HE sits it down on the desk and ponders his paper. HE raises his finger in discovery and pushes the return key knocking over the beer.

NEIL

Nuts!

(The phone rings, Neil hastily looks for some- thing to wipe up the beer, HE finally picks up a pillow from the couch and wipes up the mess. HE quickly stumbles over to answer the phone)

Hello... I'm sorry you've got the wrong number ... That's alright.

(NEIL hangs up and goes back to the type-writer. The phone rings just as he gets settled. He patiently gets up and answers it, spilling his beer again.)

Hello.... You've still got the wrong number ma'am...! I'm sorry but the phone books wrong.... Well the operator's wrong too...! Lady! This is not "Stedman's Grocery" ...! No, I don't deliver, call an obstetrician.

(HE hangs up, and then wipes up the beer with the same pillow. HE resumes his typing and then stops to ponder his work again.)

(BOB STEDMAN enters carrying several tennis rackets and is dressed in late 1950's tennis wear with a sweater. Bob is a good looking man. He is 31 years old and a magnet for women. HE comes in jubilant, swinging his rackets.)

BOB

Yahoo! Neil, ole, buddy brother of mine. You will not believe what happened to me on the courts today!

NEIL

Bob, can't you see I'm working! I've got a deadline to meet.

BOB

The most beautiful girl in the world wants me to instruct her in the fine art of tennis. What a looker!

NEIL

You say that about all of them. And if you don't stop bothering me, the world will never read about the fine art of refueling rockets.

(Reading his paper)

Oh, this stinks, stinks, stinks.

(Tears the page from the typewriter)

BOB

What's the matter? Writers block?

NEIL

No, writer's block is temporary. This is just plain stupidity. It's permanent. All day long I've been trying to develop a train of thought and everything derails me.

BOB

Nothing like that girl unstrung me! Her name is Lisa. Pretty name, don't you think....Lisa.

NEIL

Sure, Lisa's a pretty name. I thought Darla was a pretty name. - Did you break up with Darla?

BOB

(Grabs a beer)

She was getting too serious. Wanna Schlitz?

NEIL

No, thinks, I'm not through spilling the one I've got. How do you know when a girl is getting too serious?

BOB

When she farts in front of you.

NEIL

Yeah, that'd do it. What reason did you give Darla?

BOB

Well, I thought about telling her I was Jewish and a mixed relationship wouldn't workout, but I decided instead to join the priesthood.

NEIL

Someday one of your stories is going to backfire and I have this strange feeling it's going to get me too.

BOB

No, no little brother. I only tell little white lies. It's the big ones that get you into real trouble. I know exactly what I'm doing. By the way, make plans for tomorrow night. Lisa will be coming by at eight.

NEIL

I plan to work.

BOB

No, no, no. You don't understand. Lisa is coming over for some private lessons.

NEIL

Here.... in this apartment?

BOB

That's right, buddy boy.

NEIL

BOB!!!

BOB

Just one night, Neil! Please!!! She's gorgeous. You gotta help me out.

NEIL

Ok, ok, but you owe me one.

BOB

I'd rather owe you than cheat you out of it.

(The phone rings)

NEIL

Would you take that order?

BOB

(Answers the phone)

Hello ... No you've got the wrong number lady.... No lady, good- bye!

(HE hangs up)

That lady's flipped! She thinks we're a grocery store.

NEIL

I've had orders for 32 deliveries.

BOB

She's hungry too!

NEIL

The new phone book has our number listed under "Stedman's Grocery", and believe it or not, this place is open all night.

BOB

All night?

NEIL

Honest!

BOB

That's the dumbest thing I ever heard of.

(The phone rings again)

BOB (Continued)

I'll get it!

(HE picks up the phone.)

"Stedman's Grocery", can I help you...? You must have had the wrong number, ma'am, I'll be happy to take your order.... Got it! What's the address...? We'll have that for you in about a day and a half.... I'm sorry, ma'am, but we've got deliveries ahead of yours.... that's the best I can do.... Well, the same to you, lady!

(HE hangs up.)

She didn't want to wait a day and a half.

NEIL

I wish I'd thought of that thirty-two orders ago.

BOB

Why don't you take the phone off the hook?

NEIL

I'm expecting a call from my editor.

BOB

Did you call the phone company?

NEIL

(Concentrating on his work)

Yeah, I did.

BOB

Well...?

(Long pause)

WELL?

NEIL

Well what?

(Still typing)

BOB

Are they going to change the phone book or do we have to buy a cash register and get a tax I.D. number?

NEIL

I don't know.

(Still typing)

(BOB goes over and pulls the paper NEIL is working on from the type- writer. NEIL reaches quickly for the paper but BOB pulls it back.)

NEIL (continued)

Give me that! I was on a roll.

BOB

What did they say?

NEIL

What did who say?

BOB

THE PHONE COMPANY!

NEIL

They said I would have to come in, in person. They don't discuss phone numbers over the phone.

BOB

The phone company doesn't do business over the phone? There's a moral here somewhere.

(Throws the paper back)

NEIL

(Reads what he's written.)

Nuts, it still stinks.

BOB

(Moves over and sits in the couch and props his feet up on the coffee table and picks up a Playboy magazine to read. He opens the fold out.)

Hey, did Mom call you this afternoon?

NEIL

No, was she going to?

(Feeding more paper into the typewriter)

BOB

She called me at the club three times while I was giving a lesson. When I called back there wasn't any answer.

NEIL

If she's tried to call here the phone has probably been busy.  
(Searches for something and finally picks up a wad of paper from the desk. HE unravels it.)

BOB

If it's that important she'll call back.

(Phone rings)

BOB (continued)

It must be payday at the steel mills, business is booming.  
(Answers the phone)

"Stedman's Grocery"... No, no, no, you have the right number, is that you Calvin?... He's right here just a second.

(To NEIL)

It's your editor.

NEIL

(Moves over and takes the phone.)

Hi ya Calvin. Thanks for calling back. I wanted to ask about an extension on the article... Holy Cow Calvin, that's not enough time to write my address.... Do you want quick or quality...? But I've only got.... Alright, alright.... Yeah, I've got it.

(Sarcastic)

You know Calvin, I don't care what everybody else says about you, you're one heck-of-a guy.

(NEIL hangs up.)

BOB

Sounds like good news.

NEIL

My deadline's been moved up three weeks, they want the article next Friday.

BOB

Forget the article, did you get his order?

NEIL

We're quitting the grocery business.

(HE reaches over and takes the phone off the hook.)

BOB

You can't do that we've got a payroll to meet.

NEIL

I've got a deadline to meet!

(Moves back to the typewriter.)

Five days to write an article. I don't know what Calvin expects from me, I really don't.

(HE feeds a new sheet of paper into the typewriter.)

If I don't get this done he's got nobody to blame but himself.

(There's a knock at the door.)

NEIL (continued)

Whoever it is, get rid of em! I don't have time to chat.

BOB

Sure, I'll get it. I wouldn't want your typewriter to cool off.

(BOB opens the door.  
Standing there is HOWARD  
STANTON. HOWARD is  
thirty-five years old. He's not  
the best looking man you've  
ever seen, but he can appear  
almost handsome on  
occasion. Presently, he wears  
a set of black tails,  
conspicuously short a tie.  
Over the tails he's thrown a  
huge regal purple cape. He's  
also wearing a wide red sash,  
laden with medals.)

HOWARD

Bob, this is an emergency, do you have a tie I can borrow? I've got an audition in 15 minutes.

(HOWARD enters)

BOB

You know Howard, we're neighbors? You don't have to dress up to come visit. So you still work at the costume shop I see.

HOWARD

I got this outfit there. I thought I'd have a better chance if I looked the part.

BOB

How about a Schiltz?

HOWARD

No, I really can't stay. I just came over to borrow a tie. The last customer lost the one off this outfit.

(NEIL drops his head on the  
typewriter in defeat.)

BOB

Don't look at me, I put on a tie and break out in a rash.

HOWARD

Neil, have you got a tie to match this tuxedo? I've got an audition.

NEIL

(Defeated)

Don't bother me, I'm busy.

BOB

Neil, do you have a tie for Howard?

HOWARD

If you let me borrow a tie, I'll help you with your article.

NEIL

Can you explain the advantages of solid rocket fuel over liquid rocket fuel by Friday?

HOWARD

Can we get together on it right after the audition?

NEIL

I used to have one around here somewhere. I think it's in the closet.

(Moves to the closet and  
begins to throw things out.)

HOWARD

Oh, great! If I get this part it could be my big break.

(NEIL begins to search the  
rest of the apartment.)

BOB

That's what you said last time and the time before that.

HOWARD

Nobody said acting was easy. Besides, I've had some good parts. I've done Radio plays, T.V. commercials and when the regular guy is sick, I play Mighty Monkey. You know Mighty Monkey, defender of justice in the jungle.

(Makes monkey sounds and  
gestures.)

On the T.V. kids show "Hardy Har Har Clown Club".

BOB

Neil, you found that tie yet?

NEIL

What are you trying out for?

HOWARD

I'm auditioning! You audition for a play. You try out for a baseball team. -- I'm auditioning for the part of the prince of Gastania.

NEIL

I've never heard of Gastania.

(Moves into kitchen)

HOWARD

It's a fictitious country. There's no such place.

BOB

I probably shouldn't ask, but what's this play about?

HOWARD

It's called "The Fallen Prince". It's about the prince of Gastania who was exiled from his small island country after a military coupe. The central conflict revolves around the prince trying to raise money and an army to take it back.

BOB

I can't get over how obsessed you are with this acting stuff?

HOWARD

It's my life's dream.

BOB

Dating Elizabeth Taylor is my life's dream, but you wouldn't see me quitting a good job to pursue it.

HOWARD

Being a CPA wasn't such a good job. It was more like a burden.

NEIL

I found it!

HOWARD

Oh, great!

NEIL

(NEIL hands HOWARD the tie.)

It was in the frig. I don't know why I didn't look there first.

HOWARD

Thanks.

(Looks at his watch)

I've gotta run or I'll be late. Thanks Neil, you saved my career. Let the counter revolution begin!

(Exits)