

## Larry Weiss

By Daniel A. Wolf

### Cast of Characters

Larry Weiss	Harry Brooks
Marty Weiss	Jeff Trackman
Barbara Weiss	Two robbers
Professor	Two customers
Mayor of Philadelphia	Waitress
Mr. Stevens	Secretary
Dianne Davis	Herb

### Act I

#### Scene 1

*A typical mom and pop clothing store circa 1980. There are display cases in which are piles of boys' shirts and sweaters. Marty Weiss, 50 years old, proprietor of the store, stands behind a showcase and holds up a shirt for a female customer. Next to the showcase is the cash register. Marty's son, Larry, 18 years old, stands aside watching the interaction. There are various decorations and mannequins scattered around the floor.*

Marty: Look at this- long sleeve button down collar green shirt- perfect for your son.

Customer: Marty, 20 years you've been in business and you still can't tell colors. It's brown not green. *(to Larry)* Teach your father colors someday.

Larry: I will.

Marty: Brown?

Customer: Yes, Marty. Brown. *(to Larry)* You know your father's a real character.

Larry: I know.

Marty: Hey, so what I don't know colors. I can still dance.

*Marty moves from behind the counter and dances with the customer. She pushes him away.*

Customer: Get the hell off of me. How much I owe you?

*Marty returns behind the showcase.*

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Marty: \$5.98. Anything else I can get for you today?

Customer: That's enough. I'll be in Saturday. What time you open?

Marty: *(mockingly)* What time we open. It's the day before Christmas. What time you think? Noon? We open at 8.

Customer: *(surprised)* 8?

Marty: Come on. It's the busiest day of the year. Right, son?

Larry: That's right.

Customer: *(to Larry)* And what are you doing now?

Marty: Him? He's finishing high school. Graduates in June.

Customer: Congratulations. What are your plans?

Larry: I'm going to college.

Marty: Hey, don't be so modest. Tell her.

Larry: I got accepted to Temple.

Marty: Huh-how you like that! First person in our family to go to college.

Customer: You didn't go?

Marty: No, the war got in the way.

Customer: You were in the war? And we still won?

Marty: Ha, ha, ha.

Customer: What do you want to study?

Larry: I'm not sure yet.

Marty: I'd like him to major in finance.

Customer: Really? Why's that?

Marty: Tell her, Larry.

Larry: My father and I plan to go in business together.

Customer: Really?

Marty: That's right. *Weiss and Son- Men's and Boy's Wear.*

Customer: Where? Here?

Marty: Here? Are you crazy? We're moving up. baby! Some up and coming area. You know, where young people... *(to Larry)* how do you say that again?

Larry: Hang out.

Marty: Right, hang out. We've already started looking.

Customer: Well, let me know. I'll be the first one there. See you Saturday.

Marty: Get here early.

Customer: I will. Bye.

*Customer exits.*

Marty: Nice lady. She's been coming in for years.

Larry: Dad, can I ask you something?

Marty: What?

Larry: Why do you act like you don't know colors? You know colors.

Marty: Of course, I know colors. Just an old trick your grandfather taught me. Doesn't hurt to play the fool sometimes. Make the customer feel important. People like that even for a moment. OK, ready? Hit me.

*Larry takes out a paper from his pocket. Reads from the paper. Marty answers quickly and acts like hitting a baseball or doing some other sport when he answers all to display his youthfulness and mental agility.*

Larry: 12 times 13.

Marty: 156.

Larry: 14 times 17.

Marty: 238.

Larry: 22 times 35.

Marty: 770. Come on. They're too easy. Give me a hard one.

*Larry takes out a pencil and calculates a new problem.*

Larry: OK. 843 divided by 19.

Marty: 44 with a remainder of 36. Actually a remainder of 3-6-8-4 but I think 36 is enough.

*Larry shakes his head in bewilderment.*

Larry: Dad, how do you do it? Tell me.

Marty: Someday. Go on, get the broom. I want to get home. Your sister's waiting.

*Larry exits to get the broom. Marty stands behind the counter putting shirts and sweaters away. Two men enter.*

Marty: Yes, can I help you?

*Both men reveal guns and point them at Marty.*

First robber: Just give us the money and no one gets hurt.

Marty: Hey, hey, hold on. I'll get it. Just wait.

Second robber: No wait, motherfucker. Give us the money.

*Larry enters holding the broom.*

First robber: *(to Larry)* Stand right there, kid. Don't move.

Larry: Dad!

Marty: It's alright, son. Just do what they say.

First robber: Let's go! Hand it over.

*Marty stands behind cash register.*

Marty: I have to open the register. I just locked it.

*Marty takes a key out of his pocket and unlocks the register.*

Can I ask you something?

First robber: *(angrily)* What?

Marty: Did you do your Christmas shopping?

First robber: What?

Marty: You do your shopping? Today's Thursday and Christmas is Sunday. Not much time left.

Second robber: What the fuck? Just cap this mother fucker and let's get out of here.

First robber: *(to second robber)* Shut up! *(to Marty)* Why, you got something?

Second robber: What the fuck!

First robber: *(to second robber)* You hear me? I said shut up! *(to Marty)* Why- you got something?

Marty: Who's it for?

First robber: My son.

Marty: How old is he?

First robber: Seven.

Marty: Maybe a sweater?

Second robber: What are you doing? We're here to rob not shop, dumb ass. Just take the money and let's get out of here *(looks from where they entered)*

First robber: One more word and I'm gonna cap you. Now shut up. *(to Marty)* Let me see.

Marty: I have something I think you'll like.

*First robber puts gun in his pocket. Marty takes out a pile of boys sweaters from the show case. The second robber begins to look interested.*

Marty: You say he's seven?

*Marty holds up a sweater.*

I think this should fit him.

Second robber: Let me see that. *(pause)* You got something a little bigger?

Marty: Sure.

*Marty takes out another pile of sweaters. Second robber puts gun back in his pocket.*

First robber: *(to second robber)* Who, Kenny?

Second robber: Yeah.

*Marty holds up a larger sweater.*

Second robber: How much?

Marty: \$5.98

First robber: And mine?

Marty: Same.

First robber: *(to second robber)* You got any money?

Second robber: No.

First robber: I got a 20. You can pay me later.

Second robber: All right.

Marty: So that comes out to \$11.96.

*First robber hands a 20 dollar bill to Marty who opens cash register, puts the 20 in and makes change.*

Here's your change. One bag or two?

First robber: One's fine.

*Marty puts the sweaters in a bag.*

Marty: Thank you and happy holiday.

*Robbers exit. Larry stands mouth agape.*

Larry: Dad!

Marty: Hey, I fought Nazis in Europe. Think I'm gonna let some street punks scare me? Go on, finish sweeping. I want to get outta here.

Scene 2.

*College classroom. Professor stands in front of students. Seated are Jeff Trackman, Harry Brooks, Ms. Davis, and Larry.*

Professor: Well, part of your assignment was to read about interest rates- whether raising them are beneficial or detrimental to the overall health of the American economy. And as you can see from today's paper the Federal Reserve is considering raising interest rates sometime next month. So let's have a discussion-should the Fed raise interest rates? Please provide some reason or reasons to support your answer. OK, who'd like to begin? Please stand so everyone can hear you.

*Trackman raises his hand.*

Professor: Yes, Jeff.

*Jeff stands.*

Jeff: I feel it's a mistake to raise interest rates.

Professor: Why's that?

Jeff: Well, for one, if interest rates rise, interest on credit cards will rise too.

Professor: Go on.

Jeff: Generally speaking, most credit cards have variable interest rates so if the Fed raises rates credit card companies will raise their rates making things more expensive for consumers, ones buying on credit.

Professor: Very good. Who else?

*Jeff sits. Harry raises his hand.*

Professor: Harry.

*Harry stands.*

Harry: I agree with Jeff but for a different reason.

Professor: What's that?

Harry: Raising interest rates makes borrowing more expensive. And if that happens companies will spend less and even hire less which might cause a recession.

Professor: Interesting. Thank you.

*Harry sits.*

Professor:                 Anyone else?

*Dianne raises her hand.*

Professor:                 Dianne.

*Dianne stands.*

Dianne:                    With all respect to Jeff and Harry, I think we're forgetting the most important thing. An interest rate hike makes car loans and mortgages more expensive especially for first time buyers. My husband and I have been looking for a car and it's difficult to find something in our price range. An interest rate hike would make it almost impossible.

Professor:                 Thank you, Dianne.

*She sits.*

So it looks like we're all in agreement, raising interest rates is something the Fed should not do at least at this time. Doesn't anyone take a different view?

*Larry raises his hand.*

Professor:                 Yes, Mr. Larry.

*Larry stands.*

Larry:                     I think we're not looking at this correctly. Why does the Fed need to raise interest rates? It does so to keep inflation in check. Look around. Everything is more expensive. Sure, raising interest rates slows the economy, but they also slow price increase. In addition, raising interest rates is good for savers since a rate increase helps boost yields on money market accounts. And with regard to credit cards, I see no problem in credit card companies raising rates since I feel too much credit is not good for society. I believe a society is much healthier, morally speaking, when it lives within its means. May I continue?

Professor:                 By all means.

Larry:                     Just a few more points. A rate hike helps strengthens the dollar which makes imported goods cheaper. So, Ms. Davis, it might soon be a good time to buy a car, an import that is. Also, along those lines, a stronger dollar is good for Americans traveling abroad since they'll get a better exchange rate.

Professor:                 Anything else?

Larry:                     No, that's all.

Professor:                 Thank you, Larry.

*Bell rings. Students pack their bags and exit the room.*

I'll see you next week. Please continue your readings. *(to Larry)* Larry, if you're not too busy could you come to my office later today? There's something I'd like to discuss with you.

Larry: I finish at 4.

Professor: That's fine. I'll be waiting.

### Scene 3

*Professor's office. The professor sits behind a desk marking papers. Larry enters.*

Larry: You wish to see me?

Professor: Larry! Please sit down.

*Larry sits across from the professor.*

Professor: Thanks for coming in. That was a very impressive answer you gave today, by the way. I'm not sure I agree with all of it but very impressive. Larry, I want to ask you something. I know you're graduating this spring. What are your plans after that?

Larry: My father and I plan to go into business together.

Professor: What kind of business?

Larry: A clothing store-men's and boys wear.

Professor: Oh, like a mom and pop shop.

Larry: Father and son.

Professor: Same thing. And is this something you want to do?

Larry: Sure. It's been a goal of ours for years. In fact, we just found a good location in the Fishtown area. It's one reason I majored in finance so I can help with the bookkeeping and such.

Professor: Yeah, I'm sure a degree in finance can help with that. I'm sorry, where's your mother in all this?

Larry: She died when I was 10.

Professor: Oh, I'm sorry. Any siblings?

Larry: I have a sister in high school.

Professor: Larry, may I speak candidly?

Larry: Of course.



Professor: I don't know your father. I mean I'm sure he's a wonderful man and I'm sure he cares deeply about you and your future. But look around. Even around Temple. What do you see? How many mom and pops, I mean father and sons do you see?

Larry: Not many.

Professor: Not many? I don't see any. All I see are chain stores, tied to large corporations. Why? What happened? Come on, you know. What happened?

Larry: Price.

Professor: Exactly. Price. Small stores simply can't compete. Sure, they provide good customer service, but that's a small inconvenience compared to price.

Larry: I know what you're saying. But a lot of great companies began small. Ben and Jerry's, for instance.

Professor: Absolutely. Ben and Jerry's- good example. And I'll even mention a few more- Wrigley, Mattel, even Walmart all began small. But what percentage of small businesses actually succeed? Do you know?

Larry: No.

Professor: Statistically, no more than 2 or 3 out of 10.

Larry: So what are you saying? I should not work with my father?

Professor: No, I'm not saying that. All I'm saying is you might want to keep your options open. Look, Larry. You're a very bright, young man and I just don't want to see you 20 years from now working long hours, drowning in debt, trying to beat the big boys.

Larry: What options do I have?

Professor: Did you ever hear of something called wealth management?

Larry: You mean like stocks and things?

Professor: That's right. Look, I just got this yesterday. Here, take a look. It's from Deloitte Touche.

*Professor hands a paper to Larry. Larry looks at it.*

Look at the second paragraph. See what it says? *(reads)* "In 2015," not that many years from now if you think about it, "US household assets will stand at 87 trillion dollars. By 2030 that will rise to 140 trillion dollars, 64 trillion of that will be available for investment with management fees somewhere between 150 and 240 billion dollars." *(looks up at Larry)* How does that sound? Maybe a little more attractive than selling pants? *(pause)* Like I said, I'm sure your

father's a wonderful man but, frankly speaking, his time has passed. Even at... how old is he?

Larry: 54.

Professor: Even at 54 his time has passed. Just curious. Does he use any kind of technology?

Larry: No. He's not interested.

Professor: I thought so. OK look, I've said enough. I know some people in the financial industry. If you're interested get back to me and I can set something up.

*Larry remains sitting looking thoughtful.*

#### Scene 4

*Marty's store. Male customer waits while Marty puts an item in his bag. Larry stands watching.*

Marty: *(to customer)* Thank you very much. Please come again.

*Customer looking disgruntled. Marty checks register.*

*(to Larry)* Hey, not bad for a Thursday- 343 dollars.

Larry: *(under his breath, sarcastically)* Yeah, big money.

Marty: What?

Larry: Nothing.

Marty: No, I heard that. What's wrong with you these days? Think I don't notice? You're short with the customers, you're not pleasant, and how can you say to that man, *(points stage left)* "What do you expect for 3 dollars?" How can you say such thing? Maybe 3 dollars is a lot of money to him. You don't say that to a customer. I don't care who it is. He pays our bills. You remember that. Now get the broom. It's 8 o'clock and I wanna get out of here.

*Larry remains standing.*

You hear what I said? Get the broom. We have a busy day tomorrow. Get here around noon. I have to go in town and pick up a few things.

Larry: I can't come in tomorrow.

Marty: What?

Larry: I'm sorry. I can't come in. I'm busy with something.

Marty: Busy with what?

Larry: An interview.

Marty: An interview? What are you talking about- an interview?

Larry: An interview.

Marty: I heard you. What kind of interview?

Larry: A job.

Marty: A job? What are you talking-a job? You have a job. (*points to floor*) Here. Here's your job. (*to himself*) An interview. You know, Larry, sometimes I don't understand you. One minute you're so smart and the next minute you're in outer space somewhere.

Larry: I'm sorry.

Marty: Well, you should be. How can you even think about a job? I'm about to sign the lease next week. We have so much to do-all the packing, all the moving. Or d'you think I was gonna do it myself?

Larry: No, I was gonna help.

Marty: Gee, thanks. You sure? I don't want you to exert yourself. You need your rest. After all, you're 23 years old.

Larry: Dad, I need to tell you something.

Marty: What?

Larry: I can't do it.

Marty: Can't do what?

Larry: I can't go into business with you. I'm sorry, but I can't.

Marty: Really?

Larry: I'm sorry.

Marty: You know, I have an idea. Why don't you go upstairs, in the hallway. There's something I think you should see.

Larry: I saw it.

Marty: You saw what?

Larry: The sign.

Marty: What's it say?

Larry: Weiss and Son-men's and boys' wear.

Marty: Good. I mean you can't think but at least you can read.

Larry: Dad, please. I've given this a lot of thought and it's just not what I want to do.

Marty: Well, let me tell *you* something. I don't care what you want or don't want to do. You're doing it and that's that. I've put too much time and energy into this and so have you. What, you suddenly forget-all those Sundays driving around the city, talking to people, looking for a good place? Hell, you were more enthusiastic about this than I was.

Larry: I know but something came up.

Marty: What, a girl?

Larry: No.

Marty: Than what?

Larry: There's just something else I'd rather do.

Marty: What's that?

Larry: I want to be a stockbroker.

Marty: What?

Larry: A stockbroker.

Marty: Really? And who gave you this brilliant idea?

Larry: A professor.

Marty: A professor. Some guy who sits in an office all day reading books. That's who's giving you advice?

Larry: It's not just him/her. I've given this a lot of thought.

Marty: You've given this shit. Let me ask you something. Do you know what a stockbroker does? The man who does my taxes, Herb, he's a stockbroker. Let me tell you what a stockbroker does. He sits in a tiny room, reads charts, and makes phone calls. That's what a stockbroker does. Does that sound like something you like to do?

Larry: I just think I'd be good at it.

Marty: Now listen to me. Just listen. I'm your father so I think I know you better than some professor. It's not for you. You're a people person. It's here (*stomps on floor*), here (*stomps on floor*) on the floor. That's where you shine, not working with numbers all day.

Larry: But dad (*pause*), it's my life.

Marty: Then you should have told me this earlier. You had all these years to decide. I don't understand you. This was our plan. We talked about this since high school. It's why you majored in finance. Now you want

to give it up so you can make other people rich? Maybe I'd like to be rich too. Did you ever think of that?

Larry: I did think of that. It's all I thought about.

Marty: And what you conclude- better I stay here and struggle?

Larry: Yes. Better than being out of business.

Marty: Sounds like your professor again. They teach you everything except common sense.

Larry: Dad, look what's coming-Macy, Sears, Walmart. You really think you, we can compete against the giants?

Marty: Yeah, how about Krass Brothers? A multimillion dollar business right there on South Street. Started small. Built themselves up, just like we can.

Larry: Dad, I don't want. Please...

Marty: Don't give me please. What, now I'm supposed to be the understanding father? "It's alright, son, follow your dream." Well, it's not that easy. People are depending on me. I can't suddenly turn around and tell them to forget it.

Larry: Then sign the lease. I'll come in whenever I can.

Marty: Stop it.

Larry: I will.

Marty: You will not. You'll be too busy.

Larry: Do it. I know how much this means to you.

Marty: It wasn't for me. It was for you, your future. I figure in a few years I'll retire, maybe you get married, start a family. Teach your kids the business. OK, maybe they won't like, it but at least they'll know something about real life, more than you can learn in a textbook. *(pause)* Fine. I'll call and cancel the appointment. But I just want to say one thing. Don't come running to me if it doesn't work out. You understand?

Larry: Yes.

Marty: That I will not have that. Who's the interview with?

Larry: Samuel Rhodes Securities.

Marty: Wear your suit.

## Act II

### Scene 1

*Larry is in his mid-20's and works as a financial advisor at Samuel Rhodes Securities. Larry stands at the foot of Mr. Stevens office hoping to enter. Stevens sits behind an ornate desk perusing papers. Both are well dressed with suits and ties.*

Larry: Mr. Stevens, may I come in?

Stevens: Larry, please come in. Sit down.

*Larry sits across from Steven's desk.*

I was just going over your numbers for last month. Excellent. I think you're doing a splendid job here. Keep up the good work. Corporate's starting to notice, by the way. Anyway, what can I do for you?

Larry: Do you remember our initial interview?

Stevens: Of course. You were just out of college.

Larry: That's right. Do you remember what I said when you asked me my interests?

Stevens: Something about reading if I remember.

Larry: That's right. Do you remember specifically?

Stevens: I'm sorry. What was it?

Larry: Greek philosophy.

Stevens: Oh, yes. So?

Larry: Well, the other day I was reading Aristotle's *Politics* and he told a story about a philosopher named Thales. The story goes that people said to him, "If you're so smart, how come you're not rich?"

Stevens: Sounds familiar.

Larry: So Thales wanted to show that a smart man could also become rich. Let me add he was also a scientist and through calculations he was able to predict good weather which would result in a good harvest. With this knowledge he secured the rights to nearly all the olive presses at a very low rate.

Stevens: Go on. This sounds interesting.

Larry: Well, as predicted, the harvest was good which resulted in high demand for the presses. Thales charged a high price for their use and

thus became rich. What I'm saying is perhaps there's a principle here we could use at Samuel Rhodes.

Stevens: Yes, yes!

## Scene 2

*Larry is now 34 years old. He's slightly grey and wears glasses. Larry stands next to Mr. Stevens, now CEO of Samuel Rhodes Securities. A number of employees who are seated in front including Larry's sister, Barbara (29) who sits in the front row. All present are well dressed with Larry and the CEO are wearing well-tailored suits. On the side is a table with snacks and drinks.*

Stevens: Ladies and gentlemen. It gives me great honor today to announce that Larry Weiss has been chosen as our new regional vice-president. Larry, as you know, has shown superb acumen in his investment recommendations and remains thoroughly abreast of investment opportunities. In addition, Larry has demonstrated great technological savvy developing computer programs which allow us to trade in the exciting new field of derivatives as well as get in and out of positions within seconds all of which helps make us a *lot* of money.

*All laugh.*

As some of you may know, I was Larry's senior advisor when he first entered the firm. *(to Larry)* When was that? About 11 years ago, right?

Larry: That's right.

Stevens: And it's been a thrill to see him advance first as a regular financial advisor, then branch manager, and now regional vice-president. And if I'm not careful he'll be taking my place soon.

*All laugh.*

OK, pictures.

*Photographer takes pictures of Larry and CEO shaking hands. Afterwards, Larry's sister approaches them.*

Larry: Mr. Stevens, I'd like you to meet my sister, Barbara.

Stevens: It's very nice to meet you. I'm sure you're very proud of your brother.

Barbara: Yes, I am. He was always good in math. *(to Larry)* Better than me, right?

Larry: Yeah, you're right.

Stevens: How 'bout your parents? I'd love to meet them too.

Larry: It's just my father and he didn't feel well today.

Stevens: I'm sorry to hear that. I hope he feels better soon. Well, enjoy the rest of the day. And once again, congratulations.

Larry: Thank you.

*Stevens shakes hands with some employees then exits stage right. Larry approaches the photographer.*

Excuse me. What paper are you from?

Photographer: What else? The Inquirer.

Larry: So this picture will be in the paper?

Photographer: That's right, tomorrow morning. First page of the business section.

Larry: Thank you.

*Barbara approaches Larry.*

Barbara: I'm so proud of you. I just don't understand why you didn't want dad to come.

Larry: It's not for him.

Barbara: What do you mean it's not for him? He would have loved this. And besides, there's food. You know how much he loves to eat.

Larry: Next time.

Barbara: What next time?

Larry: When I'm mayor, alright? Listen, I need you to do something.

Barbara: What?

Larry: I know this is gonna sound crazy.

Barbara: What is it?

Larry: I need you to steal pop's paper tomorrow.

Barbara: What?

Larry: Please. Just get to the house early and take the paper.

Barbara: What are you talking about- take the paper?

Larry: Just do it. Please? I'd do it but I live too far.

Barbara: Forget it. I never heard such a thing. Steal a newspaper. What, he shouldn't read about this?

Larry: No, it's not that. I'll tell you later.



Barbara: You can tell me now. I have nowhere to go.

Larry: You know.

Barbara: Yeah, I thought so.

Larry: I can't help it. I still feel bad.

Barbara: Larry, it's been over 10 years. He probably forgot about it.

Larry: No, he didn't. He still mentions it.

Barbara: So he mentions it. What, he's not allowed to mention it? So you didn't go in business together. You changed your mind. It's America. You can change your mind.

Larry: I just don't want him to know. Maybe later but not now.

Barbara: You're meshugana, you know that? Complete meshugana. What parent doesn't want to know about a child's success?

Larry: You're right. And I'll tell him. I just can't right now. I'm too busy. Come on, just this once. I'll never ask again.

Barbara: You promise?

Larry: I promise.

Barbara: Meshugana. Complete meshugana.

### Scene 3

*Marty sits in the passenger side of a car. Larry stands outside the driver's side. Marty leans over and opens the door for Larry.*

Marty: When you gonna fix the door?

Larry: Mike's waiting for a part.

Marty: It's been a few weeks already. How long does it take for a part to arrive?

Larry: I don't know. I'll call him tomorrow. See if it came in.

Marty: And now your glove compartment's broken?

Larry: Yeah, I can't open it. Something's stuck. I'll tell Mike about it after he fixes the door.

Marty: Oy, how you live. You're a professional for God's sake. Act like it.

Larry: I do act like it. You should see me in the morning in my suit.

Marty: Where you shop?

Larry: Sears, Macy's. They have some great deals now.

Marty: And you're gonna tell me there's no chance for promotion? How many years have you been an advisor?

Larry: Eleven.

Marty: Eleven years. And all that time you couldn't move up?

Larry: I'm trying, dad, but it's very competitive. Relax, I'd doing fine.

Marty: How can you say you're doing fine? You drive a piece of crap car, you live in tiny room and you say you're doing fine.

Larry: Can we change the subject? Where would you like to go?

Marty: *(sarcastic)* Where. The diner.

Larry: You sure? I have a 5 dollar coupon for Nicks.

Marty: The diner's fine. Guess you got your little bottles.

*Larry takes out a small bottle of wine from his jacket.*

Larry: Right here.

Marty: You know they have a liquor license.

Larry: Why spend 6 dollars for a glass of wine?

Marty: You know they're gonna catch you someday.

Larry: Then I'll say I didn't know.

Marty: You have an answer for everything, don't you? How's your girlfriend?

Larry: Good.

Marty: I'll never understand how a classy girl like that could go for a man who lives the way you do.

Larry: It must be my scintillating personality.

Marty: Oh, yeah. You're as scintillating as a doorknob. Which reminds me-did you ever get that fixed? Oh, why even ask.

#### Scene 4.

*Ten years have passed. Larry sits at an ornate desk in his office reading various papers. He is 44 years old, greyer and a little heavier. In an adjacent room sits a secretary working on a computer. The phone rings. Secretary answers.*

Secretary: Samuel Rhodes Securities. Mr. Weiss office. *(pause)* Hold on please. I'll get him.

*Secretary enters Larry's office.*

Mr. Weiss.

*Larry looks up from his work.*

It's the mayor.

Scene 5.

*The mayor of Philadelphia stands behind a podium. TV cameramen and photographers are present. Larry stands next to the mayor. Barbara watches among others.*

Mayor: (to cameraman) Cameras ready?

Cameraman: Yes, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor: Alright, let's get started. Today it gives me great honor to announce Mr. Larry Weiss as my new city budget director. Mr. Weiss comes to the position with wide ranging experience. As corporate vice-president of Samuel Rhodes Securities, Mr. Weiss has worked with municipal governments both in the United States and abroad and thus is well aware and well prepared to deal with the financial difficulties facing his hometown, Philadelphia. It thus gives me great pleasure to introduce Mr. Larry Weiss.

Larry: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. It is indeed a great honor to work for your incoming administration. Yes, Philadelphia faces severe financial difficulties, but they are not insurmountable. I thus look forward to working with you, city council, and the good people of Philadelphia in meeting these challenges.

*Larry and the mayor shake hands for photographers and cameramen.*

Mayor: (sotto voce) Larry, I'll need that report on my desk sometime next week.

Larry: You'll have it.

Reporters: Mr. Weiss, Mr. Weiss!

Larry: Sorry, gentlemen. I have to get back to work and help make Philadelphia the great city it's always been. Good day.

*All disperse except for Barbara. Larry takes out his wallet and gives Barbara some money.*

Here's 100 dollars. Take him out to dinner. Try get there around 5:30 before the evening news comes on. And don't forget take the paper tomorrow morning.

Barbara: Are you crazy? Larry, you're the budget director of the fourth largest city in the United States! How long you think you can keep this a secret?

Larry: As long as it takes.

Barbara: What, the whole city should know except your own father?

Larry: That's right.

Barbara: You're insane. You know that? Budget director? They should have you committed.

Larry: Please.

Barbara: No! What are you saying- every time you're on TV I have to take him out to dinner and take the paper? I have a life too you know. I can't spend every day stealing newspapers!

Larry: Last time, I swear.

Barbara: You've been telling me that for 10 years already.

Larry: Please.

Barbara: No. And you can stop with your other craziness too.

Larry: What craziness?

Barbara: What craziness?! You drive a Lexus but visit him in that disgusting second hand whatever you call it. You have a beautiful home on the Main Line, but take him to that efficiency in Mayfair roaches don't even want to visit. You fly first class to meetings around the world but tell him you're taking a casino bus to Atlantic City. Then they set you up in 5 star hotels and tell him you found a guesthouse for 20 dollars a night. That craziness. Just sit down and tell him because I'm done.

Larry: I will. I'm just too busy right now.

Barbara: That's exactly what you said last time.

Larry: Please.

Barbara: No, I can't keep doing this. You seem to forget something. He's my father too, you know. Maybe it's easy for you to lie but not me. It hurts every time I have to cover for you.

Larry: I know.

Barbara: You have no choice. What- better he should find out from some stranger? Larry, you're the city budget director. Be proud of that.

Larry: You're right.

Barbara: Of course I'm right. And you know who else was right? That professor of yours. He was right too. You were too bright to be a floor salesman. I saw that when you were in high school and I was just a kid. Come on, how many kids do what their parents say and spend their entire life miserable? A lot. You did the right thing. You have nothing to feel sorry about.

Larry: I know. Barbara, please. Last time.

Barbara: (pause) Alright.

Larry: Thanks.

Scene 6.

*Marty is in his mid to late 70's, greyer, heavier, slower. He sits alone in a cafeteria restaurant. Sally, a waitress, approaches. Across the way sits his accountant, Herb. Marty waves hello then looks at a menu.*

Waitress: Good morning, Marty. What would you like today?

Marty: The usual- two eggs scrambled, home fries, any bagel toasted. And coffee.

Waitress: Be right up.

*Herb leaves his seat and walks to Marty.*

Herb: Congratulations! You must be very proud.

Marty: Proud about what?

Herb: Proud about what? Your son, dummy.

Marty: What he do? Get out of jail?

Herb: You're funny.

Marty: No, really. What he do?

Herb: You don't know?

Marty: No, I don't know.

Herb: I don't believe it. You really don't know?

Marty: No. What are you talking about?

Herb: What's the matter? You didn't see today's paper?

Marty: You know that's funny. I went out to get the paper and it wasn't there. Someone must have taken it.

Herb: Wait.

*Herb calls to Sally who stands waiting for Marty's order to come.*

Sally, do you have today's paper somewhere?

Sally: Let me go in the back. I think we have it.

*Sally exits and returns with the paper.*

Here it is.

Herb: Thanks.

*Herb lays the paper on Marty's table, turns the page and points.*

Here. Look. Isn't that your son?

Marty: Yes.

Herb: Well, congratulations. Your son's the new city budget director.

*Marty looks at the page stunned.*

Marty: Oh, my God. *(pause)* Oh, my God! *(pause)* Sally, do you mind if I keep the paper?

Sally: No, go ahead.

Marty: Herb, can I borrow your phone for a minute?

Herb: Sure, here you are.

*Herb give Marty his phone. Marty dials.*

Marty: Larry, it's your father. Could you come over after work? I got something in the mail I'd like you to look at. *(pause)* Any time's fine. *(pause)* Good. See you then. *(to Herb)* Thanks.

*Marty gives the phone back to Herb.*

### Scene 7.

*Marty sits on a man's chair in his living room. Larry sits across from him on a sofa. There's a magazine rack near the man's chair in which is the paper containing news about Larry. Larry looks at a piece of mail.*

Larry: It's nothing. Give it to Herb at tax time. He'll take care of it.

Marty: Good. I saw all those numbers I got nervous.

Larry: It's really nothing. You might have to pay a little more property taxes. That's all.

Marty: How much more?

Larry: Pennies.

Marty: Good. So how's work?

Larry: Work is work. What can you say?

Marty: Keeping you busy?

Larry: Doesn't stop. Always something.

Marty: But you like it.

Larry: Like, no like. Who even thinks about it?

Marty: But you like it.  
Larry: Yeah, I like it. Always something new.  
Marty: How you doin' with money?  
Larry: Can always use a few bucks.  
Marty: *(angry)* What's the matter? They don't pay you enough as city budget director?

*Marty takes newspaper from the magazine rack.*

What's this?  
Larry: *(pause)* The mayor appointed me budget director.  
Marty: I see that. That's quite a leap from financial advisor. How'd you pull that off?  
Larry: *(points to paper)* It's all there.  
Marty: Yeah, I read it. I see what you did, how you pulled yourself up. That's quite an accomplishment. But why I have to hear it from Herb and not from my own son? That I don't understand.  
Larry: I felt funny.  
Marty: Funny how?  
Larry: You know, *(pause)* funny.  
Marty: What funny? What you mean funny?  
Larry: Funny. I know how much you wanted us to be in business and I always felt bad about that.  
Marty: So all this time you kept it a secret?  
Larry: Yes.  
Marty: I don't understand. I'm your father. You couldn't tell me?  
Larry: I tried but I just couldn't.  
Marty: That makes no sense.  
Larry: I know. Believe me, I know.  
Marty: Here I am thinking you're still an advisor and now I find out you're budget director.  
Larry: I'm sorry. I really am.  
Marty: Must have been hard keeping this a secret, what, about 20 years.

Larry: You have no idea.

Marty: Does your sister know about this?

Larry: Yes. She stole your paper.

Marty: She stole my paper?

Larry: Yeah.

*Marty laughs.*

She stole my paper.

*Both laugh. Marty stands.*

Come here, shmuck.

*Larry stands. They hug and laugh together.*

You're a real shmuck.

Larry: Listen, dad. Let me take you to my office tomorrow. Show you around, introduce you to everyone.

Marty: I'd like that.

Larry: Good. I'll pick you up in my new car and I'm thinking of moving out of that apartment.

#### Scene 8.

*Marty and Larry enter Larry's office area. A door separates Larry's office and where Evelyn, Larry's secretary, works. Two advisors, Jeff Trackman and Harry Brooks sit at a large table in Larry's office going over papers. Both wear sport jackets and khaki pants. Larry wears an expensive dark suit in contrast to Marty's more earthly sport jacket and/or sweater. Also, Larry speaks with a slight upper-class affectation.*

Larry: Good morning, Evelyn. I'd like you to meet my father.

Evelyn: Oh, very nice to meet you, Mr. Weiss.

Marty: Thank you.

Larry: Are they in?

Evelyn: They just arrived a few minutes ago.

Larry: Thank you.

*Larry and Marty enter Larry's office.*

Larry: Fellas, come here. I'd like you to meet my father.

*Jeff and Harry leave the table to greet Marty. They wear sport jackets and khaki pants.*



Larry: These are my advisors. This is Harry Brooks

Harry: A pleasure to meet you, sir.

*They shake hands.*

Marty: Me too.

Larry: And Jeff Trackman.

Jeff: So nice to meet you.

Marty: Thank you.

*They shake hands.*

Larry: We graduated college together.

Marty: Is that right?

Harry: Yes, but Larry was always the smart one.

Larry: *(to Harry and Jeff)* I'll be with you in a minute.

Jeff: Nice to meet you sir.

*Jeff and Harry return to the table.*

Larry: Look, dad. I need to talk with these guys. I'll try not to be too long. Just sit down and relax. Is there anything I can get you- coffee, tea, bottle water?

Marty: I'm fine. Go ahead. You do what you have to do. I'll just sit here.

Larry: We'll go to lunch right after I'm done.

Marty: Take your time. I'm fine.

Larry: Good.

*Larry goes to the table. He stands at the head as Jeff and Harry sit opposite each other.*

How you doing this morning?

Jeff: Fine.

Larry: Let's go over this again. As you know, we're facing a budget deficit somewhere around 55 million dollars. As you also know we're required by law to produce a balanced budget. Now I've asked each of you to come up with a plan how we can meet our goal of a balanced budget without causing too much economic distress. The mayor needs to have our report sometime next week. So, let me hear your ideas. Jeff, please begin.

Jeff: First thing we need to do is implement an across the board hiring freeze, lay off all non-essential personnel, and suspend any and all pay increases.

*Larry looks at Marty.*

Larry: OK, but what about those departments that deal with public safety like police, fire, even sewage. Do you want a hiring freeze for them too?

Jeff: Unfortunately, yes.

Larry: Harry?

Harry: I suggest instead of a hiring freeze have each department institute non- personnel spending cuts somewhere between 2 and 4 percent.

Larry: Across the board?

Harry: That's right.

Jeff: Why across the board? Why should successful programs be cut?

Harry: Cuts between 2 and 4 percent should not have too much of an impact.

Larry: Let's take a look at the other option- a tax increase. *(to Jeff)* What are your thoughts on that?

Jeff: I think it's clear that the only way towards a balanced budget is by raising taxes. For example, I propose we institute the following three taxes- a sales tax, a property tax, and a tax on utilities. These taxes, in combination with spending cuts should go a long way towards a balanced budget.

Larry: Harry?

Harry: Did you ever notice what happens when taxes are raised? People have less money to spend. Also, look at the data. Higher taxes discourage work and investment. It will also result in more people leaving the city thus weakening our tax base.

*Larry looks at Marty.*

Jeff: But we're facing a 55 million dollar budget gap. Cutting spending will not be enough.

Harry: It will.

Jeff: It will not.

Larry: *(to Harry)* Then what do you propose? Nothing?

Harry: I'm not saying that but instead of raising taxes I suggest we raise certain fees.

Larry: Such as?

Harry: Well, for example, building inspection fees, ambulance transport fees. We can even increase library fines.

Jeff: Library fines? Larry, do you mind if I run home? I have a book overdue. I'll return the book, pay the fine, and our budget problem will be solved.

*Larry looks at Marty.*

Harry: You must really like living alone. After your plan, you'll be the only one living here.

Larry: You know, I have an idea. Why don't we ask my father? He was in business for a long time. Perhaps he can help us.

*Larry walks over to Marty who sits with his hands folded on his stomach.*

Dad, we're having a problem and I thought maybe you can help us. You see, the city is facing a severe budget deficit. We have infrastructure that needs to be funded. You know, things like roads, bridges, construction...

Marty: OK.

Larry: Well, like I said, these things need to be funded. The problem is we don't have the tax base to do so. So I'm asking what you would you do in this situation.

Marty: Me? How would I know? I ran a small business. What do I know about running a city?

Larry: That's true but a lot of the same principles apply to both a small business and a city. Alright, let's try this. The city is running a deficit. Not enough money is coming into the public treasury. Now the deficit is due primarily to a high interest rate on accumulated debt over many years.

Marty: On what?

Larry: Accumulated debt.

Marty: Larry, I have no idea what you're talking about.

Larry: *(getting frustrated)* Alright, let's try this. A big problem we're facing is that businesses are moving out of the city.

Marty: Like your Uncle Moe.

Larry: That's right. Like Uncle Moe. And when they leave they take the jobs with them which reduces our tax revenue, money we need to operate the city. Understand?

Marty: *(shakes his head)* Not really.

*Harry leaves the table and approaches Larry.*

Harry: Larry, we have a deadline. We have to get this done.

Larry: *(turns to Harry)* Wait!

Harry: Larry, he doesn't know.

Larry: He knows! He knows! It's just an old trick of his like the colors. *(to Marty)* Right, dad? Remember that? Act like you don't know colors.

Harry: Larry, please.

Larry: I said wait! *(to Marty)* Alright, let's try this. Think about the last few years of the store. Your sales were going down, people were moving out of the area. You were also losing customers because they were getting older so their needs were less.

Marty: OK.

Larry: So at this point what you should have done was change the business to attract younger customers.

Marty: Yeah, and whose fault was that? That was our plan. We were going to move.

*Larry is pained by the remark but continues.*

Larry: Let's put that aside for now, shall we? *(pause)* Look, remember Doctor Cohen? He was a good customer for years. But over time your competition was better able to meet his needs because you didn't keep up with things.

Marty: What things?

Larry: Like technology. And now Dr. Cohen is doing business elsewhere.

Marty: What technology?

Larry: Technology. You know, computers.

Marty: You and your damn computers.

*Marty takes a small notebook out of his sports jacket pocket.*

You want to see my computer? *(holds up notebook)* Here's my computer. *(opens notebook)* Two lines: money in, money out. That's my computer. And who the hell cares about Doctor Cohen? He was only one customer. I had many others.

Larry: Of course you did. But all business depends on your top 10 percent. It's your top 10 percent that drives 90 percent of your profits.

Marty: So what are you're saying I was a lousy businessman?

Larry: Oh, no. Oh, no. You were a great businessman.

Harry: Larry, please.

Larry: *(to Harry)* You should have seen this man. *(to Marty)* How 'bout the time those two guys came in to rob you?

Marty: What two guys? Mel and Ottie?

Larry: No, not Mel and Ottie. Those two guys. They had guns to your head. *(to Harry)* Oh, you should have seen this. *(recreates scene)* These two guys come in with guns pointing right at his head and he winds up making a sale. I'm standing there shaking and he's selling. *(to Marty)* I think both of them bought, didn't they? Didn't the other guy buy too?

Marty: What other guy?

Larry: The other guy! They came in to rob you.

Marty: Hey, no-one ever robbed me. Never.

Harry: Larry, he doesn't remember. Come on. We have work to do.

Larry: One minute.

*There is a long pause as Larry looks at his father realizing he's no longer the vital, robust man he had always known.*

Larry: Dad, how much is 12 times 5?

Marty: 12 times 5? *(pause)* I don't know.

Larry: 7 times 8.

Marty: *(shakes his head)* No idea.

Larry: 7 times 5.

*Marty shakes his head no and wanly smiles.*

Larry: It's 35, dad. 35.

Scene 9.

*Larry and Marty stand outside on the pavement.*

Marty: Are you OK? You seemed a little frazzled up there.

Larry: I'm alright.

Marty: Don't let the job get to you like that. Relax.

Larry: I know. What do you feel like eating?

Marty: Any good delis around here?

Larry: Plenty.

Marty: I feel like a bowl of soup.

Larry: You don't look like a bowl of soup.

Marty: What?

Larry: *(smiles)* Nothing. I know a good place.

Marty: Just make sure the soup's hot.

Larry: I'll tell 'em. Come on, let's go.

*Larry and Marty begin walking.*

Marty: You got some nice fellas up there.

Larry: I know.

Marty: Could dress a little better.

Larry: I'll tell 'em.

*Larry and Marty exit.*

Scene 10.

*Larry sits at a desk in his office stage right. He peruses papers. The mayor enters. Larry stands.*

Larry: Mr. Mayor! What do I owe the pleasure?

Mayor: Please sit down.

*Larry sits.*

I'm just coming in to say thank you for all you have done. Because of you and your staff, Philadelphia is now on a sound financial footing.

Larry: Thank you and may I say it was an honor to work for you, sir. I only wish you could run again.

Mayor: Me too. But as you know the charter allows only two terms for mayor.

Larry: I know.

Mayor: Just curious. Have you given any thought what you might do? I suppose you'll probably go back into private practice.

Larry: I haven't given that much thought, to be honest.

Mayor: May I make a suggestion? Why don't you run for public office, mayor even? You'd certainly have my backing and I think you'd make a fine candidate.

Larry: Thank you. Well, let me think about it.

Mayor: Anyway, whatever you do I wish you all the best and thanks again for all your hard work. Please convey the same to your staff.

Larry: I will.

*Larry stands. They shake hands.*

Thank you, Mr. Mayor.

*Mayor exits. Larry sits thinking then dials his phone. Barbara enters and stands stage left. She is dressed as if she is walking outside.*

Barbara, how you doing?

*Barbara hears the phone ring in her pocketbook, and answers it.*

Barbara: Fine. What's up?

Larry: Look, I need to tell you something. I made a decision.

Barbara: What's that?

Larry: I've decided to run for mayor. I'm announcing tomorrow. Don't forget to steal the newspaper.

Barbara: *(shakes her head, smiles)* Meshugana!

*Larry laughs.*

**End of play**

