

# **I Don't Tell Lies, Read My Lips**

**A Short Play for Storytellers**

*by Chuck Larkin*

# I Don't Tell Lies, Read My Lips.

Traditional Story from the Website of Bluegrass Storyteller, Chuck Larkin

...This play in Act I, contains traditional tall tale material.

Act II needs four stories to be inserted to complete the play.

## ACT I, SCENE I

CHARACTERS:

SHERIFF

IRENE

JOHN

SILVESTER

MS. THOMPSON

(Upstage right, outside facade THOMPSON'S GROCERY, Sheriff enters from the store holding a fishing pole as John and Irene walk up.)

SHERIFF: (slow) Howdy John, Irene, How are you folks? (fast) You look fine John! Don't you just look fine! And how are you Irene?

IRENE: Fair to middling Sheriff. You going fishing?

SHERIFF: Just been, Irene. On the Nassawanga creek down near the Snow Hill bridge.

IRENE: That's where we're heading soon as we pick up some bait. John has a lately acquired boat down there.

SHERIFF: Oh, a new boat! Whatcha got John?

JOHN: (Turns, walks down stage center, addresses audience slow with pride. He pauses and builds to a fast chant.) I have a 12 foot, flat bottom, 80 percent graphite, 20 percent fiberglass punt. Mail ordered from the L.L. Bean catalogue. A three-sitter with customized sheepskin covers. Built in is a dry box, bait well, insulated cooler, gas grill, hammock stand with a Hatteras Hammock and a mini powder room with its own pink, free standing, rip stop nylon, tent. This miniaturized baby blue windjammer with fuchsia racing stripes down the sides slices smooooothly through the water powered by a pop up, wind driven double lanteen sail rig; and if becalmed the skiff's mobility is enhanced by a 353 horse powered Harley Davidson, silent running, rotary, inboard engine with a cruising range of 5,322 nautical miles. Haw! (John turns walks back and enters the store.)

SHERIFF: Sorry about that Irene. I forgot for a moment.

IRENE: Oh, don't let it bother you Sheriff. We all forget at times. His therapist thinks that John's Baron Munchausen syndrome comes from the fact he was born on his Momma's birthday. His Momma had been looking foreword to getting a new fur coat, and got John instead. I can tell

you that could disappoint some folks. That, and the fact that as a baby he was so ugly his folks left the hospital with sacks over their heads, I've seen the pictures. When they brought him home, their cat tried to cover him up and their dog went outside and started eating grass. His folks couldn't decide weather to use a crib or a cage. His Moma developed morning sickness after John was born. It's no wonder they used sandpaper for diapers. There was a high side though. Every time he was carried into a room the roaches would gather into family groups, climb up the walls, out onto the ceiling and with their feet locked together they would leap to their deaths. They did make a small tidy fortune renting him out to rid homes and barns of roaches. That can leave you a mite strange too, even though today he's a nice looking man. But you have to admit, that was some description of our flat bottomed row boat with one sculling oar! He'll do right well in the Storytelling Festival. Say, Sheriff, did you catch any fish?

SHERIFF: Partly. I went out fishing with Silvester. I was sort of curious how he got such good catches. And, well, you know I kind of wondered if it was done lawfully.

IRENE: He does keep Ms. Thompson's store here well stocked, and a with a nice variety too. Is Silvester using illicit nets or traps?

SHERIFF: Never seen any. Almost caught him illegally fishing last Labor day. You hear what he did to me?

IRENE: Not that I recall, Sheriff.

SHERIFF: Well, I haven't said anything before this. It was kind funny looking back, but at the time I was a mite put out. Also, being up for re-election had me nervous and stepping high like a rooster in deep mud.

(The lights come up on stage left as the lights on stage right come down. Silvester enters and sits in the rowboat two chairs facing each other with a side board toward the audience with "ROWBOAT" painted on side. There is also a small washtub of water on down stage side with "CREEK" painted on the side.)

SHERIFF: (While crossing stage) I thought I was doing some slick investigating, and got myself invited out in Silvester's boat. We were up the Creek a ways. (Sheriff sits in boat and after a pause) Silvester what are you doing with that that that stick of dynamite?

(Silvester lights, holds briefly and tosses a candle into the tub of water, and we hear a LOUD sound effect an explosion. A waterproof flashlight covered with a red gel can be substituted for the candle.)

SHERIFF: Silvester! You can't do that! That's illegal! It's against the law! You simply can not fish with dynamite!

(looking into the tub) My, my, look at all them fish floating up. Silvester, you just can't fish like that! I'm going to have to arrest you

(Silvester lights and holds second candle.)

SHERIFF: Silvester you have the right to remain silent, and if Silvester, I said that's illegal!

(Silvester hands the sheriff the lit candle.)

SILVESTER: Sheriff, are you going to talk or fish?

(The Sheriff throws candle in tub of water, and there is a second explosion off stage. Sheriff stands up, gets out of boat, walks stage right as lighting shifts.)

SHERIFF: Irene, I couldn't hardly arrest him for illicit fishing without arresting myself. Why, my stick of dynamite blew up more fish than his did!

IRENE: It seems to me that I recall a walloping huge Bass fish mounted on a teak wood plaque, hanging on your office wall with the spider hook still in his jaw from that fishing trip last Labor day. Just when did you catch him Sheriff? Wasn't it that trip with Silvester?

SHERIFF: Crisscross diddle on a horse hope to die before I'd lie. I never said "how" I caught that fish. It's not my bent to tell a fib. That bass floated up from my unlawful fishing with that spider hook in his mouth. I caught him, no reason not to mount him. The way I see it, between hay and grass it's neither one nor the other.

IRENE: (Laughing) Sheriff, you sound like a man trying to tear the middle of the street in two. Tell me, was Silvester's fishing legal this morning?

(The lights come up on stage left. Sheriff walks over and stands next to the boat and addresses the audience.)

SHERIFF: I'm just not sure. Now he's using short paper sacks like school lunch sacks...

(Silvester holds up a paper sack and, while the Sheriff talks, puts in a rock and four tablets. He drops the sack into the tub and picks up a dip net. He puts a rock in each paper sack then he puts four Alka Seltzer tablets into each sack.)

...As the rocks sucked the paper sacks down to the bottom of the creek, the water pours in and the Alka Seltzer begins to fizz and floats up out of the sacks...

(Irene moves down stage right with a tall glass of water and drops in an Alka Seltzer tablet to show audience. Sheriff watches Irene, then continues to the audience.)

...The Alka Seltzer fizzing and rising buzz, buzz, buzz...

(Sheriff makes a hand gesture, wiggling and raising hand)

...Up through the water, you know, like you've seen fizzing in a glass of water. Well fish, specifically, Bass fish, well, they're not wrapped too tight, you know. They're always one brick shy of a full load. They just are not the sharpest knife in the drawer. They think the fizzing chunks of Alka Seltzer are wounded minnows. The scatterbrained Bass fish swim in and gobbles up them chunks. The Alka Seltzer continues to fizz and the gas just blows up their tummies like little balloons. Sure enough, they float right to the top. He just dippets them right out! Would you believe? He even had Alka Seltzer plus cold medicine tablets in one sack...

(Silvester dip nets a large red fish out of the tub and puts it in the boat as the Sheriff speaks. Irene moves up stage to the store.)

...For the other species of fish, he takes an eye dropper and drips six drops of his own special blend of Swiss Dark Chocolate and Irish Cream off the stern of the boat. If I hadn't seen it myself, I would have never believed it. That mixture had the water swirling with fish. Silvester said that more than six drops put them into a feeding frenzy, and there were too many damaged fish. Silvester just dip nets them until his arms are tired.

(Turns and moves up stage right to Irene)

To tell you the truth, Irene I don't know if the law excludes that kind of fishing or even covers it. However, after thinking it over, I came to realize that there must have been some under-sized fish getting into his dip net. So I went back to start up my arrest procedure, but right in front of my eyes Silvester up and left!

IRENE: Silvester up and left! How did he do that Sheriff? He walk on water or swim away?

SHERIFF: Silvester's a slick one all right. No, he didn't walk on water or swim. We came round Corbin's bend on the Nassawanga, and the creek was covered with them humongous Canada Geese. Silvester, he grabbed him a ball of fishing twine and a Barlow jack knife. He grabbed my bait bucket, dumped out all of my earth worms and whispered to me to keep an eye on the bait. Irene, have you ever tried to keep up with a mess of crawling earthworms? It was chaos! Silvester, well he put that bucket over his head and slipped into the water. I watched the bucket for about an hour or so out moving back and forth among all them Canada Geese. Best I can figure, Irene, Silvester, under water and under the bucket, would slip up next to a Goose, tie one end of the fishing line to the Goose's foot, run the line off that ball of twine, cut it with his Barlow knife and tie the other end to his belt. With him hid under the bucket and

swimming, why, the Geese never even got skittish! After a couple of hours, I watched the bucket coming toward me. Suddenly Sylvester stood up in the shallows and shouted, "I have caught me some fine Canada Geese, Sheriff!" Yes, Irene, that's what I figured Sylvester did, 'cause when he stood up, that flock of about 333 Canada Geese flew up and left south with Sylvester dangling below.

(Sheriff moves up stage to Irene and John)

IRENE: So that's how Sylvester just up and left! Well, he was saying just last week he was going to take a trip to Disney World down in Florida this year. You could say he just went sooner than he planned!

JOHN: How's them Alka Seltzer caught fish going to taste? Let's get one on the way home, Irene, and try it out.

SHERIFF: Don't know how they'd taste, I just left Sylvester's catch with Ms. Thompson. She's cleaning them out back now. That was the last thing Sylvester hollered down to me when he up and left dangling under them Geese. Folks, I've got to run. Irene, are you and John entering the Tall Tale Storytelling Festival again this year? (LOUD) See you later, Ms. Thompson!

MS. THOMPSON: (off stage) All right Darling. Mongsty-oall comegeen.

IRENE: We probably will Sheriff, if we can come up with a story. It's so hard on us not to be truthful. You know I'd rather eat fried chicken than to tell a lie!

SHERIFF: Now that aught to get earn you an opportunity to be a featured tall tale teller at the international storytelling festival over in Jonesborough, Tennessee! But I understand your feelings. Cross wire my heart, I'd hope to fry 'fore I'd tell a lie.

(Sheriff exits)

JOHN: I was considering, Irene. I'll bet one could eat a mess of Sylvester's special caught fish and not get indigestion!

(They exit.)

## **ACT I, SCENE II**

### **THE NEXT DAY.**

(Inside Thompson's General Store. There is a small table and chairs with multi-colored table cloth.)

SYLVESTER: About my up and leaving you yesterday, Sheriff. To tell you the truth...

SHERIFF: Now hold on Sylvester! Why you're too clever by half. You'd climb a tall tree, fib and fabricate before you'd stand on the ground and tell the truth!

SYLVESTER: Sheriff, I've turned over a new leaf. I might tell you something 7 or 8 different ways, but I'd walk on my lips before I'd tell another lie. I have seen the error of my ways.

IRENE: Honesty and peaceful Sheep are the best company one can keep.

SYLVESTER: That's right, Ms. Irene. Liars, hypocrites and a crowing hen will surely come to some bad end.

IRENE: My Grandmother used to say sing away sorrow, cast away care, it's better to wear out than rust out. Though I never did figure out how you rust out.

SYLVESTER: I never did figure out that one either, but it does have a good sound to it, Irene. As I was saying, shortly after I up and left you yesterday morning, Sheriff, I found myself dangling beneath them 333 Canada Geese about 10 miles south at more or less 2,000 feet altitude.

MS. THOMPSON: Was it cold up there, Sylvester?

SYLVESTER: Yes ma'am, it was. It was real cold. Reminded me of that cold, cold, cold day last January when we all pushed Frederick's house down the street to jump start his furnace. Remember? We were watching Frederick's beagle hound dogs. It was so cold they had a set of jumper cables attached to a bunny rabbit trying to get him started so they could chase him.

IRENE: I remember that morning. I recall going down to the barn to feed the chickens, and it was so cold my shadow froze to the ground. Just look at that poor thing laying there, its still ragged from being ripped off the ground so sudden like.

MS. THOMPSON: Uh huh, I remember that day! Yes, that morning I was in the barn and it was sure enough bad cold. I hate to have to milk a cow when it's that cold. When I took off my gloves and put my nice warm hands on that cold, cold, cold cow. You probably won't believe this, but honor bright, when I put my nice warm hands on that cold cow she turned her head around and looked at me and said... (use cow voice and body language here)

" Ohhhhhhh, thank you that feels soooo goooood!" And that's the truth. I don't tell lies. Why, If I told you I had seen a rooster dipping snuff, you could lift his wing and find the snuff box. It turned out, I had to use a pair of pliers to finish milking the cow. I'd get one squirt and before it touched the bottom of the bucket it would freeze solid. I stacked those squirts of frozen milk up like fire wood and carried them into the house. Yes, that's a fact, It was that cold. I do not lie, just read my lips! If my dear departed first husband Bill was here, he would testify to my love of the truth without equivocation.

SHERIFF: Yes, and I remember Bill too. The most pious charlatan that ever fabricated a yarn. And oh yes, I remember that cold, cold day. I had to go over to Ms. Momma Leigh's house and stop her from conducting a funeral for her husband Tom. I told her just because he was born tired and turned lazy didn't mean he was dead enough to bury. Tom is so henpecked he has no rooster left. You know he is the worst kind of a hypochondriac. She has him so convinced he's sick and dying he has taken to eating and sleeping in a coffin. He says that way when he does pass Momma Leigh won't have any problem lifting him in the coffin. She has him wearing his good Poplin suit, that summer suit is as thin as a one sided pancake. To tell you the truth, he does look good all laid out, real natural like. It's a wonder he don't catch his death a cold. I believe she is planning the perfect crime. That cabin's drafty front room, where the coffin is on display, was so cold it was hard to hold a conversation. The words kept hanging up in the air, out about a foot and a half, froze like soft ice cream. We finely got the words gathered into a bucket and opened the kitchen door. In by the kitchen stove, I set down the bucket where the words could thaw out so we could hear what we'd been saying. Tom's mother-in-law, Ms. Rapelle, arrived as we sat in the kitchen with a beautiful apple pie. Tom could see it through the open kitchen door from the coffin. He whispered a few frost covered words that floated into the kitchen, asking for a piece of the pie. Ms. Rapelle told him no, that pie was for his funeral. Well, the ladies finely agreed to no premature burials. Best I can figure, it's not illegal. I mean, Tom can get up and at least put a coat, a blanket or something on. By the way, Sylvester after you all had to jump start the furnace, did Frederick ever replace the furnace, or find out why it wouldn't start?

MS. THOMPSON: I sold Frederick a barrel wood stove. He said he was going to install it himself.

SYLVESTER: He did! Yep, he did. He installed the barrel wood stove himself, but he installed it upside down. The stove's draft valve being on the wrong end caused it to draw down the chimney when he lit it off.

MS. THOMPSON: Oh yes, it was a good thing it rained that afternoon. I heard tell that the stove sucked six cords of seasoned split logs down the chimney from the wood pile. He had the wood stacked next to the eaves of the low end of his slanted roof. It was a regular blast furnace with the logs just rolling up the roof and down the chimney until the rain started and enough water was drawn down the chimney to douse the fire. Oh how I wished I could have seen that!

IRENE: I was passing by when it all got started. Frederick almost lost his cabin. The chimney, for a while there,

was like a reverse booster jet. Sounded like one too. Frederick was outside the back door near the wood pile and he was holding on to the back gallery railing! I mean he was holding on for dear life, stretched out horizontal to the ground, trying not to be pulled into that funnel-like vortex around the wood pile. I leaped into the front door, darted across the floor and grabbed the barrel stove's damper valve. However, in just those few seconds I looked out the window, the cabin had lifted a good 15 feet off the ground. The tornado-like funnel coming out of the chimney had torn loose, whipped up into the air and pulled the cabin up! Luckily, the end touched a rain cloud passing over. I eased the damper closed slow like so as to not drop the cabin, but just eased it back down on it's foundations. By that time, the rainwater began being pulled out of the cloud and doused the fire. It was exciting.

SHERIFF: Frederick ought to have known how to install a barrel stove.

IRENE: Actually he planned it that way. He wanted the stove to draw down the chimney. Frederick had already built a slide from the woodpile up to his chimney in order for the stove to pull up the wood as needed. He had the smoke vented under the cabin in a network of pipes to keep his floor warm. He even had the smoke filtered up through a rain barrel to keep down pollution and heat his water. You know how inventive and ecological minded he is.

SHERIFF: How did it get away from him?

IRENE: He was out side checking the slide when the vibration opened the damper valve. He's got it modified now, working fine.

MS. THOMPSON: What did he do?

IRENE: He had Dr. Lesser mix him up a good strong mustard plaster, like for drawing out chest colds. Frederick put that mustered plaster on the top-inside of the chimney to draw against the barrel stove. Now the stove just draws down enough wood to keep up a good fire.

SYLVESTER: That is a fine invention. Saves from having to hall in wood everyday from the wood pile. Has he applied for a patent?

IRENE: I don't rightly know about that.

MS. THOMPSON: Irene, are you going to use that story in the tall tale telling?

Irene: No, that really happened although it does have a good feel to it as a tall tale.

(John enters store.)

JOHN: Ms. Thompson, there is a Pink MXZ-2000

Stretch Convertible just drove up outside pulling a 22 foot Environmentally Controlled Western Horse Trailer carrying a dapple gray horse with the diamond mark on his forehead all riding on Michelin 400-AAA tires.

MS. THOMPSON: Thank you John. Sylvester, since you've unloaded the delivery truck and know the stock here in the store, why don't you try out your new sales training techniques on your first customer. Remember what I said earlier in the sales meeting class. Success is where opportunity and preparation meet, often disguised as hard work. Set your goal and go for it. You can't make a hit if you have no aim in life. Think positive, and you'll become the picture of what you think you are. Sell, Sell, Sell. Oh I just love them sales clichés.

(Sylvester struts out the door.)

SHERIFF: Ms. Thompson, Sylvester is he working for you? He actually wanted a job?

JOHN: Ms. Thompson, I see you got 4 doors here at the store.

MS. THOMPSON: Don't be silly, John. Yes Sheriff, apparently the experience of being up near heaven dangling under them 333 Canada Geese has given Sylvester a religious conversion and a new perspective on life. I hired him this morning.

JOHN: Yep, that's a fact, you got 4 doors here.

MS. THOMPSON: John, I only got two doors here as any fool can see and I don't have any extras back in stock.

(Sylvester enters store and while speaking goes over to the table, removes the multi-colored table cloth, folds it and exits the store.)

SYLVESTER: That customer has a million dollar race horse out there he bought in the Bluegrass area of Kentucky. He wants to buy a horse blanket. There's none in stock but this table cloth is close. Looks like a summer-weight horse blanket to me and a pretty one at that.

JOHN: I got \$10.00 says you got 4 doors here at the general store, Ms. Thompson.

SHERIFF: I been thinking. Saying that Sylvester had a religious experience is like saying someone was a meat-eating vegetarian. On the other hand, Sylvester is apt to believe something he knows nothing about.

MS. THOMPSON: Oh now, be kind Sheriff I think Sylvester has turned over a new leaf. Try to be an optimist. John you silly, all right, I'll take your money. You got a bet. \$10 says there's only 2 doors here.

SHERIFF: An optimist is someone who checks their marriage license every Monday morning to see if there's an expiration date. Come to think of it, I guess my Mom was an optimist, because I can remember Mom would dig out my birth certificate occasionally to see if it had an expiration date. You're right though, Ms. Thompson. I stand corrected, I'll give him the benefit of the doubt.

IRENE: If Sylvester has found religion, the crime rate in this county is going to go into a sharp decline.

JOHN: Well Ms. Thompson, You've got a front door and a back door. That's 2. Sylvester unloading the delivery truck this morning makes him a stevedore. That's 3, and number 4 is the cuspidor over yonder we use when training for the water melon seed spitting contest.

MS. THOMPSON: Here's your \$10.00 John.

(Sylvester enters, stands and re-folds the multi-colored table cloth with a different color showing, then exits after the following lines.)

SYLVESTER: I told that feller that this horse blanket cost \$100. He said it was too cheep for a million dollar race horse! There now, this ought to be worth \$215.00. After all, it's a prettier color.

IRENE: Sounds like you may have been right not to count your chickens before they hatch, Sheriff.

JOHN: I remember mama saying that her granddaddy, after being pitched off a mule on his head, thought he was a chicken and would eat nothing but cracked corn, chicken feed and lightning bugs.

MS. THOMPSON: What did your mama's grandmother do about your great granddaddy thinking he was a chicken, John?

JOHN: Nothing much, especially after great-granddaddy started laying eggs that glowed in the dark. The family made some money selling the lit up eggs to the rural electrification program. They thought they were going to get rich but after they sold the first batch, they discovered the eggs would self-cook from the heat they generated. They never could develop a market for hard boiled eggs that twinkled except around Easter, and the power company couldn't use a flashing egg.

(Sylvester enters and again re-folds the multi-color table cloth until another color is on the outside, speaking his lines and exits.)

SYLVESTER: That fancy dude leered down his nose at me and said that a \$215 horse blanket is still too cheep for his million dollar race horse and wants the best we got in stock. Well this here \$9.98 table cloth folded this way is

now the best. A \$499.98 horse blanket best that can also be used for picnics.

MS. THOMPSON: Well my granny who started this general store always said, it ain't hardly worth talking if'n your gonna tell the truth. I have always found that our customers prefer well articulated created reality to the babbled hum and haw of naked truth.

JOHN: The truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth is a precious, national, finite resource that needs to be diligently protected and preserved. We should follow the lead of our national public and private leadership by using the truth most sparingly, even during the most trying times of the severest emergencies. Even then, we'd rather hear fictional statements. After all, a well spoken, deceiving, but inventive fib always goes down like slick-boiled okra while the truth can stick in your craw. Being clear sighted is dangerous and seditious to our community's sense of well being. Why, don't you just love an elected politician's loquacious twaddle! Especially a lead dog's pettifogging practices. Let a President speak to us through the little boxes and we fall in line, nose to tail, like sled dogs waiting to be hitched into the traces knowing that only the trustworthy lead dog is legitimately able to describe what we need to know about the changing scenery. Oh, I love it. After all, as they say in the high levels of government, when caught with their hand in the proverbial cookie jar, under the circumstances, we did tell the truth.

IRENE: Don't it just get to you when you realize John's total aversion to the truth may be the right path, the steel that undergirds business, our community, our state, our nation, our way of life. Truth is stranger then fiction. No elected or totalitarian form of government could survive on truth.

(Sylvester enters and gives the money to Ms. Thompson.)

Ms. Thompson: Thank you, Sylvester. \$499.98. My, you did a fine job! Say, Sylvester, I'll bet you \$10.00 I got 4 doors in this store...

SHERIFF: Sylvester, I heard you got religion. Now, just how do you figure to tie together religion and the sale of that \$9.98 second hand multi-colored table cloth as a horse blanket for \$499.98?

SYLVESTER: Well now, Ms. Thompson, I've learned the stock in this store. You ain't got but two doors, front and back. There ain't no extras. You got a bet. Sheriff, yesterday, as I was saying earlier, I got to thinking about my life. Dangling under 333 Canada geese at 2,000 feet gives you pause to think. I decided to re-dedicate my life. Now, I'm a beginner at religion, but that business transaction with that race horse owning tourist was according to scripture. "If thou meets a stranger thou shalt take him in."

MS. THOMPSON: The front and back door that's two, Sylvester, your unloading the delivery truck this morning makes you a stevedore. That's three and four is and oh, my, my... that fool spittoon has cost me \$20.00. Here's your \$10 Sylvester.

SHERIFF: I believe if Moses had of met Sylvester we would have an Eleventh Commandment. By the way Sylvester, I've told everybody how you up and left yesterday, how did you get home?

(Sylvester moves down stage center and addresses the audience and demonstrates his experience.)

SYLVESTER: After dangling under them geese for a spell, I found myself a bit cramped, so I stretched and reached up with my right hand and, grabbing a bunch of string on my right, I pulled the string. The whole flock of 333 geese banked and turned right. After a while, I figured out how to turn left and right and I wheeled them geese around and headed for home. When I got over the farm, I pulled and tied the geese on my right side short. That put the flock into a permanent bank around and around the barn. Next I pulled one goose at a time down and wrapped the string around the goose's wings. That way the goose couldn't fly. That way, I gradually reduced the flock's lifting power and increased the weight. I landed by the barn as gentle as a feather. This morning, I used the geese to fly 15 bales of hay up from the East pasture to my barn's hay loft. By golly, that's automated farming for sure.

MS. THOMPSON: You see Sheriff, Sylvester is a natural businessman. Now that he's automated the agribusiness on his farm, he'll have time to work here in the general store. Fact is. We're planning to train some homing pigeons to work with the geese and provide a home delivery service.

JOHN: Sylvester, I was telling Irene this morning about how much better I felt after eating them Alka Seltzer with cold medicine caught fish for supper last night. Fact is, it's even cured my hay fever.

SYLVESTER: Why thank you John. I'm still working on the presentation concept and can use your endorsement. I was planning to introduce bottled Alka Seltzer with cold medicine fish juice tonic with curative properties to sell to the crowd at the Storytelling Festival next week. I had some fish juice tonic this morning. It's right tasty chilled.

SHERIFF: Being hauled up into the air... that sure must have been a scary experience, Sylvester.

SYLVESTER: Oh it was exciting, but I don't remember being scared.

SHERIFF: Now come on, Sylvester! If you weren't scared, how come your hair done turned white?

SYLVESTER: Sheriff have you ever hung under a flock of geese for two hours?

(The lights dim.)

INTERMISSION

**ACT II**

(Storytelling festival, one week later)

Four chairs, stage left, facing stage center and the audience for the featured presenters and one chair stage right for the emcee.

Presenters go to stage center facing audience with house lights up for eye contact. All five enter with as Sylvester, the emcee takes stage center. The rest sit down.)

SYLVESTER: Ladies and Gentleman, welcome to the opening of the Ninth Annual Corbin's Corner Storytelling Festival. Tonight for your enjoyment we have four featured Storytellers who will regal, amuse and delight us with stories. But first I need your kind indulgence for a short commercial break. Corbin's Corner is proud to announce to you, the Audience, the availability for the first time of Dr. Parker's Elixir. Mothers, Fathers, do your children have worms? Are your children occasionally fidgety or sleepy? Once in awhile are they peevish, or unpleasant? Now or then, do they pick their nose, grind their teeth or play the fool? Friends, if your little ones at home display any of these aberrant behavior episodes unaccompanied or in any combination these are symptoms of worms! For your precious piece of mind, during intermission pick up a bottle of Dr. Parker's Elixir. It kills worms, regulates the body's systems, improves a child's character and restores everybody's frame of mind while maintaining a healthy temperament. Thank you. Ladies and Gentlemen, our first Storyteller tonight is our Sheriff, whom we have elected to office each term as we did the Sheriff's parents and Grandparents. Please give the Sheriff a warm welcome.

(Sheriff moves stage center, and Sylvester takes his seat)

Sheriff: (insert a story)

(Sheriff sits down and Sylvester introduces Irene)

SYLVESTER: Thank you Sheriff. Before I introduce our next storyteller, let me say a few more words about Dr. Parker's Elixir. As you visit Corbin's Corner during your stay in our fair community, you may hear people refer to me as Dr. Sylvester. Well, I will not tell you a lie. Not to mince the matter, I will take a public stand on this issue. I have a deep love of truth the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Ladies and gentlemen, I am not a doctor. I never formally educated myself beyond the books in our town's public library. Our Town's doctor who passed in full health several years

ago at the age of 123 provided us with the recipe for this tonic which we have named Dr. Parker's Elixir in his honor. In Corbin's Corner, we are proud to announce for the first time the absence of sickness and disabling ailments that human-kind has suffered from. In Ms. Thompson's General store is a small back room museum filled with used eye glasses, canes, crutches and wheel-chairs unused since the concoction of Dr. Parker's Elixir, which may be used either as a tonic for the inside or an instant cooling, comforting liniment on the outside. I know what you're thinking. Will it cure everything? My friends, frankly, we don't know. When used all over the body as a liniment you feel as if you have received both a Swedish massage and the healing art of Chinese Acupuncture without the needles, might I add. When just rubbed on the back and spine, your vertebrae will self-align as if a Chiropractor had giving you healing adjustments.

Please excuse me for getting carried away, During intermission you will be able to buy yourself a sample and we will give you an opportunity later to add your testimonial to our growing list. You do have to be cautious. Dr. Parker's life-enhancing Elixir needs to be taken in moderation. One of our friends, a neighbor, after their initial sampling, felt themselves grow younger everyday. They got carried away and consumed an excessive amount of Dr. Parker's Elixir. Last month their name showed up in the birth notices.

Ladies and Gentlemen please welcome our next Storyteller, Ms. Irene Jones.

(Irene stands and tells)

IRENE: (insert a story)

SYLVESTER: Before we take a brief intermission, let me say a few more words about Dr. Parker's Elixir. Here in Corbin's Corner, when our neighbors have taken Dr. Parker's Elixir as a tonic, we have observed amazing symptom redress. Both heart dropsy and night flotations have been arrested, and you are put into a looking- forwards mood. Our Optometrist has changed her practice over to the manufacture of binoculars and our Dentist makes fine gold and silver jewelry. Both are successful, since healthy people work steady and become consumers. I can tell you the Elixir cures hoarseness, restores personality, stimulates the appetite and long time married couples begin kissing again. But the Elixir formula, of course, will have to remain a secret. The world is not ready for the economic dislocations that would occur if released without gradual introduction and careful planning. I can tell you that mixed in with Dr. Parker's amazing discovery is Ginseng Root, Dianaemma Root, Alfalfa, Four Leaf Clovers, Bee Pollen, Essence of Horseradish, and aged apple Cider with a scattering of herbs, plant sap, and berries all raised in our local hospital, now converted into a hydroponic farm providing needed



employment for our fellow citizens who were formally employed in the healing arts. During intermission, we have a limited supply of samples available moderately priced in order to cover the cost of our overhead. We will now take a ten minute break.

### **INTERMISSION**

SYLVESTER: Welcome back folks. We had not anticipated such a large turn out to purchase a sample of Dr. Parker's Elixir. Therefore, we will provide you with an opportunity to take home this wonderful Elixir at the end of tonight's performance. And now, it is my pleasure to welcome the proprietor of our country store, Storyteller Ms. Thompson.

(She stands and begins)

MS. THOMPSON: (INSERT A STORY)

SYLVESTER: Thank you Ms. Thompson. Ladies and Gentlemen we have one more Storyteller but first let me take this opportunity to speak to those who have acquired a bottle of Dr. Parker's Elixir. Ladies and Gentlemen if I were to assure you that this tonic was a cure all I would be lying to you. We just don't know. However we believe that there are five things the stomach, the liver, the kidneys the principle organs that maintains our healthy bodies in order for

the head and hart to enjoy the pleasures of life. When you partake of this Elixir for the first time do not be surprised if in the morning when you wake up your eyes are stuck together. Wash with warm water it is just the poison and toxins being drawn out of your body. For the first day our neighbors drew from their bodies handfuls of slime, mucus, and corruption and yes even worms. But the second day you will feel good, you will feel like springtime, you will feel the sap rising in your body. You will feel the nesting instinct of the birds of the air. Oh you are in for an exciting time. We still have a few bottles left but first please welcome our last featured Storyteller John Jones.

(John stands and tells)

JOHN: (INSERT A STORY)

SYLVESTER: That's it folks thanks for turning out to hear our featured Storytellers. Drive home safe with your bottle of Dr. Parker's Elixir you can still pick up a bottle. And if you run out of gas or need oil, mix one teaspoon to a gallon of water for gas and two teaspoons to a quart of water for oil. Now folks that's to be our little secret. Our nation cannot afford disruptions and collapse of both the medical and oil industry at the same time.

WE WISH Y'ALL A GOODNIGHT!