

PARABLES FOR THE TV GENERATION

by J.P. Martin



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Parables for the TV Generation

by J. P. MARTIN

Five Christian sketch spoofs
of popular television shows

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Special thanks to the cast and crew of T.C. Saturday Nite for putting up with my writer's idiosyncrasies, to Helen Siskind Parsons, my "conscience" throughout this work, and, above all, to the Lord God for his unfailing grace.

I Love Looney

“Steward’s Folly”

Synopsis: After yet another financial fiasco, Looney learns what it means to be a good steward.

Approximate Running Time: 5 minutes

Setting: Living room of Ricardi apartment. Go as simple or elaborate as you wish with the '50s decor. The basics needed are a sofa, a table, and a rug. You'll need a front door at Upstage Center, a kitchen door at Stage Left, and a bedroom door at Stage Right.

Cast: Looney Ricardi, Young Urban Housewife; Richie Ricardi, Looney's husband; Bethel Hertz, Looney's neighbor and best friend.

Time: The mid-fifties.

Costume Suggestions:

Looney should be wearing a '50s-style dress. Since she has just been shopping, the dress should be somewhat fancier than a house dress. Our Looney wore a black-and-white polka dot dress similar to the one worn by Lucille Ball in the original program. Second-hand stores are a great resource for this type of costume.

Richie wears a dark suit and striped tie.

Bethel wears a '50s-style house dress. This shouldn't be difficult to locate, since house dresses, as a rule, haven't changed much in the last forty years. Bethel also wears an apron. A pinafore style (one that has a top portion that slips over the arms or head) works best, but any apron will do. You might check with friends for one, or any store that sells housewares usually carries some. If you are handy with a sewing machine, patterns are available from a yard-goods store. They're not difficult (or costly) to make.

Props: Boxes and bags from a shopping spree including one box marked “Pierre’s” with a fancy '50s dress inside; checkbook; “frivolous frock”; hanky.

In my experience as a writer, it is not always easy to say whether the idea for a sketch comes first from the subject matter, i.e. stewardship, or from the characters to be used in conveying the message of that subject matter. In the case of this *I Love Lucy* spoof, I think we had our characters first. "Let's do Lucy," someone suggested.

Then it was up to me to find suitable subject matter for what is, of course, a well-established set of characters. I didn't have to look very far or very long, however. The subject matter presented itself with my very next look at the show itself. The episode depicted our heroine at her financial worst — something about an over-abused household budget — and I thought, "How better to offer an object lesson in stewardship than to have the queen of financial fiascos learn what it means to be a good steward? And who better to deliver this lesson than long-suffering hubby Richie?" Add a little requisite banter between Looney and best friend Bethel Hertz, and I had the start of what was to become an audience favorite.

It is my sincere hope that you have as much fun presenting this sketch as I had preparing it, and, if we all learn a little something along the way, we can only be the better for it.

— JPM

(Lights come up on Ricardi living room. LOONEY enters from bedroom and "floats" around, carefree and happy. The furniture, a sofa and table, are covered with boxes, bags, and other evidence of yet another of her wild spending sprees. While she is admiring her purchases, BETHEL HERTZ pops her head through the front door.)

BETHEL: Hi, neighbor.

LOONEY: Oh, hi, Bethel. Come on in. *(BETHEL steps inside. She can't help but notice the packages of merchandise on the sofa.)*

BETHEL: Been shopping?

LOONEY: No, not really. I was just feeling a bit, you know, blah, and decided I needed a little pick-me-up.

BETHEL: A little pick-me-up? By the looks of this take, I'd say you ought to be downright giddy. *(BETHEL peruses the packages, her interest piqued. She points to box marked "Pierre's.")* What's in that one? *(LOONEY opens it and removes dress that is the epitome of '50s haute couture. She holds it up to herself, "modeling" it for BETHEL.)* Oh, Looney, it's gorgeous!

LOONEY: *(Hugging dress to herself)* Isn't it, though? And it was such a steal, too. Only fifty dollars.

BETHEL: Fifty dollars! Why, if I ever paid fifty dollars for a dress, Ned would blow a gasket. *(Pause)* What did Richie say when he saw it?

LOONEY: *(Folding dress over arm)* Bethel Hertz, you know me better than that. You know he hasn't seen it yet.

BETHEL: *(Correcting herself)* Oh, that's right. Are you going to use the old closet trick again?

LOONEY: *(Proudly)* I am. I'm going to tuck this away in my closet, you know, sort of lay low for a while. Then I'll bring it out, and when Richie asks about it, I'll say, "This old thing? Why, it's been hanging in my closet for months." *(The two laugh, but BETHEL is philosophical.)*

BETHEL: Looney, has it ever occurred to you that

1 eventually he's going to catch on to this little scheme of
2 yours?

3 **LOONEY:** Richie? Are you kidding? Don't be such a worry-
4 wart. Richie would never get upset over my buying one
5 little old dress.

6 **RICHIE:** *(From Off-stage)* Looney! You got some 'splainin' to
7 do!

8 **BETHEL:** *(Mimicking LOONEY's last words)* Oh, Richie would
9 never get upset over my buying one little old dress.
10 Won't get upset, huh? *(She heads for the kitchen.)* You'll
11 excuse me, won't you? I don't want to get caught in the
12 crossfire.

13 **LOONEY:** *(Panicky, grabbing at BETHEL's apron strings)* Bethel,
14 you wouldn't desert me now, would you? Just when I
15 need your moral support! Can't you stay?

16 **BETHEL:** *(Pauses, turns.)* Nothing doing. I figure you must've
17 really overextended your budget for Richie to be this
18 upset. *(Stomping can be heard beyond front door. LOONEY*
19 *rushes to gather and hide evidence of her binge.)*

20 **LOONEY:** *(Pleading)* Please, Bethel.

21 **BETHEL:** Absolutely not. You dug yourself into this hole. It's
22 up to you to dig yourself out. Ta ta. *(BETHEL exits.)*

23 **LOONEY:** *(Whining)* Oh, Bethel. *(LOONEY hurries to hide her*
24 *packages, stuffing them under the sofa cushions, the table, the*
25 *rug, etc. RICHIE enters, catching LOONEY with an armful of*
26 *packages. He is holding a checkbook, and there is blood in his*
27 *eye. LOONEY sports her best cover-up smile.)* Oh, hi, dear.
28 You're home early. *(RICHIE strolls around sofa, inspecting*
29 *the "spoils" of LOONEY's latest spree. He looks under rug,*
30 *cushions, etc. He holds up a frivolous frock.)*

31 **RICHIE:** You know, I was down at the club when I heard a
32 couple of the boys talking. Bill Monroe said he thought
33 he'd seen you coming out of Macy's. Ralph Jenkins said
34 he saw you heading into Sak's. They both said you
35 looked like a red tornado, and Ralph called you *(Folding*

- 1 *arms*) "Ole Spendthrift Ricardi."
- 2 **LOONEY:** Now, Richie.
- 3 **RICHIE:** (*Ignoring this*) Now, I was just about to speak up in
- 4 your defense, when I got a call from the bank telling me
- 5 that your checking account was overdrawn. It was —
- 6 how did the bank manager put it? "So far in the red that
- 7 at first I thought your wife was a member of Congress."
- 8 (*LOONEY stares, wide-eyed, at RICHIE.*)
- 9 **LOONEY:** (*Defending her actions*) But Richie, I don't
- 10 understand. I can't be overdrawn.
- 11 **RICHIE:** (*Skeptical but willing to listen*) OK, Spendthrift.
- 12 'Splain.
- 13 **LOONEY:** (*Looking at RICHIE sideways*) 'Splain?
- 14 **RICHIE:** You heard me. 'Splain.
- 15 **LOONEY:** (*Thinks for a moment.*) Well, after I went shopping, I
- 16 learned I was a little short on funds in the checking
- 17 account, so I borrowed some money from the emergency
- 18 fund to make up the difference.
- 19 **RICHIE:** I see.
- 20 **LOONEY:** (*Wringing hands*) Yes. Well, then the emergency
- 21 fund was short, so I took some money from the savings
- 22 account to cover the emergency fund.
- 23 **RICHIE:** (*Interested now*) Go on.
- 24 **LOONEY:** (*Nervously shifting from foot to foot*) Well, then I just
- 25 *had* to cover the savings account, so I borrowed some
- 26 money from the Christmas club.
- 27 **RICHIE:** (*Like a district attorney going in for the kill*) And where,
- 28 pray tell, did you come up with the cash to cover the
- 29 Christmas club? (*LOONEY pauses, thinking. As the light*
- 30 *dawns, she answers.*)
- 31 **LOONEY:** (*Wincing*) From the checking account.
- 32 **RICHIE:** (*Threateningly*) Looneey!
- 33 **LOONEY:** (*Jumping back, biting nail*) Welll.
- 34 **RICHIE:** (*Pacing floor, shaking head*) I dunt believe it.
- 35 **LOONEY:** (*Following RICHIE with eyes*) You dunt?

1 **RICHIE:** No, I dunt. Looney, I give you a generous allowance
 2 every week. From that allowance, I 'spect you to run
 3 this household. In addition, I allow a little extra to
 4 provide for your personal needs — clothes, makeup...
 5 *(He looks at LOONEY's red hair as she nervously runs a hand*
 6 *over it) ...'cetera. But this — (He motions to packages) ...this*
 7 *is ridiculous. (LOONEY starts to cry. RICHIE softens, crosses*
 8 *to her, and puts an arm around her shoulders.)* Looney, why
 9 dint you just tell me you were short on funds? It
 10 would've saved us both a lot of trouble.

11 **LOONEY:** I know, but I thought I could take care of things
 12 myself. Instead... *(She takes hanky from RICHIE's pocket*
 13 *and blows nose loudly) ...I made things even worse.*

14 **RICHIE:** You know, as my wife, you are the steward of this
 15 household. You are accountable to me for the proper
 16 handling of our finances, just as down at the club I am
 17 responsible for its financial well-being. And, ultimately,
 18 we are both accountable to an even higher authority.
 19 *(Both look heavenward in awe.)*

20 **LOONEY:** Oh, Richie, I've made such a mess of things. Can
 21 you ever forgive me?

22 **RICHIE:** I think that can be arranged.

23 **LOONEY:** *(Resolved now)* From now on, things are going to be
 24 different around here. I'm going to be more responsible
 25 with the funds allotted to me. *(She moves to sofa and picks*
 26 *up expensive dress.)* And I'm going to start by returning
 27 this dress. *(RICHIE joins her at sofa, helps her to pack.)*

28 **RICHIE:** Looney, I love you. *(Music comes up as they kiss '50s*
 29 *style.)*

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Leave It to Cheaver

“New Life”

Synopsis: A broken toaster leads to a lesson on broken lives for Cheaver and his dad.

Approximate Running Time: 3 minutes

Setting: The garage. There is a workbench at Center Stage.

Cast: Cheaver, a boy of eight; Dad, Cheaver’s Dad.

Time: The late fifties.

Costume Suggestions:

Cheaver wears dungarees (jeans) and a striped or plaid shirt. Don’t forget the canvas hi-top sneakers. The shoes are still available, but watch where you shop. I came across a pair for \$29.99! Try a discount shoe store, or check with friends about borrowing some.

Dad wears a nice casual shirt and slacks. He might even wear a cardigan sweater.

Props: Toaster (the cord doesn’t really need to be frayed — Dad can fake it), assorted tools, Bible.

Leave It to Beaver is truly an icon of TV's Golden Age. With an excellent writing staff and absolute gem of a cast, *Beaver's* sheer simplicity and honest approach to a boy's life often brought a tear to the eye. We have used the Beaver premise a number of times to deal with the many concerns of childhood: choosing the Christian life over the world; obedience to parents, etc., and have never failed to touch the hearts of those in the audience.

While the "Beaver" character can be successfully portrayed by a child, it can be just as effective with an adult actor. This way, your troupe need not be prohibited from performing the sketch due to the absence of young actors. Our Cheaver was portrayed by an adult with excellent results.

— JPM

1 *(Lights come up on garage. DAD is already in place at*
2 *workbench, Center Stage. He is busy repairing the family*
3 *toaster. CHEAVER enters. He has just come from his weekly*
4 *Bible club meeting and carries his Bible under his arm.)*

5 **CHEAVER: Hi, Dad. *(Looks at workbench.)* Whatcha doin'?**

6 **DAD: I'm fixing the toaster, Cheaver. It seems your mother**
7 **has yet to learn how to disconnect an electrical**
8 **appliance from the outlet.**

9 **CHEAVER: Oh?**

10 **DAD: Yes. Instead of pulling the thing out by the plug as**
11 **you're supposed to, she insists upon yanking on the**
12 **cord. *(He displays frayed cord end.)* See that? She ruins**
13 **more appliances that way. This is the second one this**
14 **month. Honestly, I don't know what I'm going to do with**
15 **her. That woman could keep Peavy's Hardware Store in**
16 **the black single-handedly.**

17 **CHEAVER: *(Watching DAD toil over repair)* Gee, Dad, wouldn't**
18 **it be a lot easier if you just went out and bought another**
19 **toaster?**

20 **DAD: *(Smiles.)* It might be easier, Cheave, and I'm sure Mr.**
21 **Johnson down at the appliance store would be thrilled,**
22 **but it simply isn't necessary.**

23 **CHEAVER: Why's that, Dad?**

24 **DAD: Well, you see, son, the only thing wrong with this**
25 **toaster is that it has a bad power cord. The rest of the**
26 **toaster is still good. All I need to do is spend a dollar or**
27 **so on a new cord or plug. Then I make the repair myself,**
28 **and we're in business again. *(Holds up repaired toaster***
29 ***cord.)* See there? Good as new. You have to admit, it's a**
30 **lot easier on the pocketbook.**

31 **CHEAVER: Hey, that's kinda neat.**

32 **DAD: Yes, it is kind of "neat." A couple of turns of the**
33 **screwdriver, and I've given the toaster new life.**

34 **CHEAVER: *(Thinking)* You know what, Dad?**

35 **DAD: What's that, son?**

- 1 **CHEAVER:** This toaster reminds me of our Bible lesson.
2 **DAD:** Oh?
3 **CHEAVER:** Yeah. In our lesson today, Mr. Smith told us that
4 we're all kinda like the toaster — broke, I mean. Only
5 we're broke by sin. He said that it was Jesus who paid
6 the price of fixin' us when he died for our sins on the
7 cross. So now all we have to do to have a new life in
8 Jesus is to ask him to come into our hearts. That's kinda
9 neat, huh, Dad?
10 **DAD:** *(Obviously touched)* Yes, son. That's kinda neat.
11 **CHEAVER:** And you know what else Mr. Smith said, Dad?
12 **DAD:** No, Cheave, what else did he say?
13 **CHEAVER:** Well, Mr. Smith said that *anybody* can ask for
14 that new life in Jesus, Dad. It could be a kid, or even old
15 guys — like you.
16 **DAD:** *(Smoothing wounded ego)* That's good to know, son. *(DAD*
17 *gathers up the toaster and prepares to make his exit.*
18 *CHEAVER follows, obviously deep in thought.)*
19 **CHEAVER:** Hey, Dad?
20 **DAD:** Yes, Cheave?
21 **CHEAVER:** Do you think it'd be OK if I told the toaster story
22 at our next Bible club meeting?
23 **DAD:** *(Pausing at door)* I don't see why not. But — *(Confidentially)*
24 you needn't mention it to your mother.
25 **CHEAVER:** Oh? Why's that?
26 **DAD:** It wouldn't do to have her know just how simple these
27 appliance repairs really are. I'm afraid she'd have me
28 fixing things day and night. *(They exit, laughing.)*
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Far Trek

“Where No Missionary Has Gone Before”

Synopsis: On a very un-routine mission to the Alpha-Omega star system, Captain Quirk and company experience a close encounter of the celestial kind.

Approximate Running Time: 7 to 8 minutes

Setting: Bridge of the U.S.S. *Centerprise*, a federation starship. The engineering station is at Stage Left. The science station and communications are at Stage Right. The command chair (a swivel-type office chair) is at Center Stage. The helm is Down-stage. It is helpful to watch the original show for inspiration on how to execute the set. It can be fairly simple or more realistic. The original production used a lot of “winky blinky” stuff, including office equipment like computers. The viewscreen could be a movie screen. Or you could go the route of cardboard boxes that have been painted to look like computer panels with Christmas tree lights affixed. The “computers” (boxes) may be arranged in a semicircle around the command chair.

Cast: James T. Quirk, captain of U.S.S. *Centerprise*; Mr. Sock, alien/first officer; Dr. Decoy, chief medical officer; Celestial Being, God’s messenger; Mr. Scottish, chief engineer; Mr. Solo, helmsman; Lt. Yohara, communications officer; Yeoman; Guard.

Time: Mid-twenty-third century.

Costume Suggestions:

All characters (except Celestial Being) should wear turtlenecks with black sweatpants. Each character’s shirt should be a different color. Pin a triangular logo (made of cardboard) to the shirts over the heart. All crew members may also wear headphones.

Celestial Being should wear a funky, all-white outfit with a watch in her pocket.

Props: Bibles, paper for “report,” pen.

Sound Effects: Emergency klaxon. You’ll have to watch a few *Star Trek* episodes to get a feel for this!

This sketch has to be my all-time personal favorite. When I first started writing some years ago, my plan was to write the definitive *Star Trek* novel. Well, that plan got sidetracked over the years by numerous other writing pursuits — including this current pursuit — although some original poetry from the work has been published.

The plain fact is I'm a diehard *Star Trek* fanatic. Years of work in the comic book/sci-fi industry left me with a fairly sizeable library of Trek lore, so when the powers that be for our local drama troupe approached me about doing a *Trek* spoof, I was, to say the least, ecstatic.

I think you'll agree this is a fun little sketch, designed to be "hammed to the hilt." The characters are already larger-than-life; it won't hurt to make them a little larger. Enjoy.

— JPM

1 *(Stage is black. Music with QUIRK voice-over plays through.)*

2 **QUIRK:** *(Voice-over from Off-stage or taped)* **Space — the final**
3 **mission field. These are the voyages of the Starship**
4 **Centerprise. Its five-year mission: to seek out new life**
5 **and share the good news of God's love, to boldly go**
6 **where no missionary has gone before.**

7 *(Music ends. Lights come up on Centerprise bridge. CAPTAIN*
8 *QUIRK is in the command chair. SOLO is at the helm. SOCK*
9 *is at the science station. MR. SCOTTISH is at the engineering*
10 *station. LT. YOHARA is at the communications station. The*
11 *GUARD is posted at Upstage Center. The various stations are*
12 *active. A YEOMAN enters and crosses to QUIRK, delivers a*
13 *report for signature, collects same, and exits. Over this,*
14 *QUIRK's log entry is read.)*

15 **QUIRK:** *(Log entry voice-over — Off-stage)* **Captain's Log —**
16 **Stardate 2718.6. We have just completed a successful**
17 **mission to the Vega Colony, where once again we**
18 **managed to save the galaxy as we know it from**
19 **imminent doom. We are currently en route for Alpha**
20 **Omega, a little-known star system at the farthest reach**
21 **of deep space, to investigate a disturbance of unknown**
22 **origin. Unbeknownst to any of us at this time, our lives**
23 **were about to be forever changed by a close encounter**
24 **of the celestial kind.** *(Centerprise bridge noise comes up,*
25 *remains behind dialog.)*

26 **LT. YOHARA:** *(Professionally)* **All systems functioning, Captain.**
27 **All stations show ready.**

28 **QUIRK:** **Thank you, Lieutenant. Current status, Helm?**

29 **SOLO:** **Approaching Alpha Omega VII. Space normal speed.**
30 **ETA fifteen minutes.**

31 **QUIRK:** *(Turning to science station)* **Science Officer, report.**
32 *(MR. SOCK leaves his station to stand at QUIRK's side.)*

33 **SOCK:** **Alpha Omega VII is a Class M planet with nitrogen-**
34 **oxygen atmosphere within acceptable norms. Mean**
35 **distance from its sun and total mass point nine nine**

- 1 that of Earth.
- 2 **QUIRK:** Any sign of life?
- 3 **SOCK:** Bioscan incomplete at this time due to the
4 disturbance, but indications are — *(Emergency klaxon*
5 *sounds. SOCK hurries back to his station as lights go red. A*
6 *blinding white light appears Downstage from “viewscreen.”*
7 *Klaxon fades to background.)*
- 8 **QUIRK:** Screens up, Mr. Scottish.
- 9 **SCOTTISH:** Screens, aye.
- 10 **QUIRK:** Mr. Sock, what is it?
- 11 **SOCK:** Unknown, Captain. It cannot be measured by any
12 standard method. *(Crewmen squint, hold hands up against*
13 *glare. DR. DECOY enters through bridge door, crosses to*
14 *QUIRK and stands, leaning against command chair.)*
- 15 **DECOY:** What's up, Jim?
- 16 **QUIRK:** *(Motioning to viewscreen)* There's some kind of thing
17 out there, Boney.
- 18 **DECOY:** Why is any object we don't understand always
19 called a thing? *(QUIRK shrugs. A female voice calls from Off-*
20 *stage.)*
- 21 **CELESTIAL BEING:** *(Mysteriously, Off-stage)* Captain Quirk.
- 22 **QUIRK:** I'm Quirk. Who are you, and what is your intent?
- 23 **CELESTIAL BEING:** *(Sing-song fashion, Off-stage)* My name is
24 not important. The message that I bring to you is.
- 25 **QUIRK:** Message? What message?
- 26 **SCOTTISH:** *(Urgently)* Captain, the screens have just gone
27 dead. *(QUIRK looks first to SCOTTISH, then to viewscreen.)*
- 28 **QUIRK:** What have you done to my ship? *(CELESTIAL BEING*
29 *enters from behind viewscreen. Klaxon dies and lights return to*
30 *normal. QUIRK stands.)* Security! *(SCOTTISH and GUARD*
31 *rush to take being from behind. CELESTIAL BEING raises a*
32 *hand, stopping GUARD and SCOTTISH, who return to their*
33 *previous positions. QUIRK's arms akimbo, outraged:)* For the
34 last time, who are you, and what is the meaning of this
35 invasion?

1 **CELESTIAL BEING:** (*Bubbly and all smiles*) Why, I bring news
 2 from the Father.
 3 **QUIRK:** Your father?
 4 **CELESTIAL BEING:** *The Father.* (*QUIRK looks around at*
 5 *colleagues, then back to CELESTIAL BEING.*)
 6 **QUIRK:** You mean father, as in God?
 7 **CELESTIAL BEING:** (*Looking heavenward*) Why do I get all the
 8 tough assignments? (*To QUIRK*) Of course I mean God.
 9 **SOCK:** (*Stepping forward*) Do you mean to say that you are a
 10 messenger from God?
 11 **CELESTIAL BEING:** I am.
 12 **SOCK:** That...er...madam, is illogical.
 13 **CELESTIAL BEING:** Nevertheless, sir, it is true. (*SOCK raises*
 14 *both eyebrows.*)
 15 **QUIRK:** (*Puzzled*) I don't understand. What would God want
 16 with us?
 17 **CELESTIAL BEING:** (*Facetiously, rolling eyes*) Heaven only
 18 knows. (*Beat*) Seriously, he has had his eye on you for
 19 quite some time and, well, he has a proposition to offer
 20 you.
 21 **QUIRK:** (*Dubiously*) Go on.
 22 **CELESTIAL BEING:** You see, it is rumored throughout all of
 23 creation that you are the best crew in the Farfleet.
 24 **QUIRK:** (*Swagger showing*) Continue.
 25 **CELESTIAL BEING:** We're looking for a few good men (*Looks*
 26 *around*) and women — to, well, (*Dramatically*) to boldly go
 27 where no missionary has gone before.
 28 **DECOY:** You mean you want us to serve as missionaries?
 29 **CELESTIAL BEING:** No. (*Points heavenward.*) He wants you to
 30 serve as missionaries.
 31 **QUIRK:** But we're a deep space exploration vessel.
 32 **CELESTIAL BEING:** And so you would remain. He only asks
 33 that when you do make contact with new life forms, you
 34 take the opportunity to share the Good News.
 35 (*CELESTIAL BEING produces several Bibles for QUIRK's*

1 *inspection.*)

2 **DECOY:** But we're not trained for missionary work.

3 **CELESTIAL BEING:** You leave the training to us. We have a
4 complete staff ready to prepare your crew for this new
5 mission. (*Pressing closer to QUIRK.*) I personally oversee
6 Witnessing 101 myself.

7 **QUIRK:** (*Stepping back*) Well...er...I don't know. I'd have to
8 give the matter some serious consideration.

9 **SOCK:** Captain, we cannot —

10 **DECOY:** Oh, Sock, don't be such a stuffed shirt. (*SOCK raises*
11 *an eyebrow.*) You know, it might not be such a bad idea at
12 that. (*Waxing nostalgic*) I remember my grandmother
13 taking me to missionary meetings when I was a boy. It's
14 one of the reasons I decided to become a doctor.

15 **LT. YOHARA:** I think it's a wonderful idea.

16 **SCOTTISH:** Aye. We'll follow in the footsteps of those great
17 Scots: David Livingstone, John Knox, Eric Liddell. (*The*
18 *entire crew gives consent to the new mission — all, that is,*
19 *except SOCK.*)

20 **QUIRK:** (*Noting this*) Mr. Sock, we haven't heard from you
21 yet. How about it? Are you with us?

22 **DECOY:** Come on, Sock. It just wouldn't be the same without
23 you. (*Everyone expresses agreement. SOCK considers for a*
24 *moment.*)

25 **SOCK:** While I can't profess to understand the full
26 implications of such a venture, I am willing to give it my
27 best shot.

28 **QUIRK:** Well then, it's unanimous. We'll do it.

29 **CELESTIAL BEING:** Excellent. I'll make all the arrangements.
30 My staff and I should be ready to begin your training in
31 about two solar days.

32 **QUIRK:** Staff? They aren't all like you?

33 **CELESTIAL BEING:** Oh, no. (*Primping*) No, beauty as rare as
34 mine happens only once in an age.

35 **QUIRK:** (*Gesturing*) That's a relief.

1 **CELESTIAL BEING:** *(Ignoring this)* What you are about to
 2 undertake is a worthy venture; you will not regret it.
 3 *(Takes watch out of pocket.)* Now, if you will excuse me, I
 4 have another engagement. I have to see an angel named
 5 Smith. Something about an overdue promotion.

6 **DECOY:** Oh? Helping him on his *Byway to Heaven*?

7 **CELESTIAL BEING:** You might say that. *(Turns to leave.)* Well,
 8 it's been pleasant chatting with you. I'll be in touch.
 9 Ciao. *(CELESTIAL BEING exits. The entire crew waves to her.*
 10 *QUIRK, catching himself, puts his hand down quickly. He*
 11 *returns to his chair. DECOY and SOCK flank him.)*

12 **DECOY:** Was that thing real, Jim? Or did we just imagine it?

13 **QUIRK:** I don't know, Boney, but I won't tell Farfleet
 14 Command if you won't.

15 **DECOY:** That's a deal. Besides, they'd never believe us.

16 **QUIRK:** Imagine us as missionaries, commissioned to
 17 explore strange new worlds; to seek out new life and
 18 share the good news of God's love; to boldly go where no
 19 missionary has gone before. You know, Boney, that has
 20 a nice ring to it.

21 **DECOY:** Could be why you used it in the opening sequence.

22 **QUIRK:** *(Embarrassed)* Oh, yeah. *(Regaining swagger)* You
 23 know, I'm kinda looking forward to this new mission.
 24 Who knows what sort of excitement is in store for us?

25 **SOCK:** Indeed. It should prove — interesting.

26 **QUIRK:** *(Sitting back)* Gentlemen, it looks as if our
 27 investigation here is complete. Helm, take us out of
 28 here.

29 **SOLO:** Course heading, Captain?

30 **QUIRK:** *(Motioning to viewscreen)* Out there. Thataway. *(Stage*
 31 *blacks out as end music comes up.)*

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The Twinight Zone

“A Very Good Life”

Synopsis: Bill Reynolds learns — through extraordinary means — that the road to heaven is not paved by works alone.

Approximate Running Time: 5 minutes

Setting: The outskirts of heaven. Pearly gates are situated at Stage Left. They may be made of cardboard and painted white.

Cast: Bill Reynolds, an average man; Rob Sterling, our host and guide; Extras, waiting to pass into heaven; Figures in Black, two nonspeaking roles.

Time: An average day.

Costume Suggestions:

Rob Sterling wears a dark suit and tie, dark shoes, etc.

Bill Reynolds wears a casual shirt and jeans, such as might be worn to a baseball game. He spots a ball cap with his favorite team's logo on it. The shirt might also be a team shirt, if desired.

The Figures in Black should dress from head to toe in black (shirt, shoes, slacks), and should wear black cowls over the entire head (best), a black hood (OK), or a black, Lone Ranger-style face mask (acceptable).

The Extras may be dressed in costumes representing various walks of life. These might include a nurse in full uniform, a construction worker with tool belt and hard hat, ministers, doctors, chefs, nuns — let your imagination run wild. Don't forget to include a couple children.

Props: A sports team pennant (may be purchased at a novelty or sports store or made from felt and a wooden dowel).

I will have to admit, this sketch was a trifle difficult to write. It started with the germ of an idea: i.e., the consequences of one's having lived a life (even a "Christian" life) without ever experiencing a faith relationship with Christ. I said, "What would it be like for someone to get all the way to the gates of heaven, only to find all his good intentions had been for naught?" Scary thought, isn't it? Then I said, "What if this same person was made to go through such an experience, and then offered a second chance at salvation?"

In considering the many ways in which this situation might be presented, the television program *The Twilight Zone* came to mind more than once. Each week, Rod Serling put us all through the emotional "ropes" before confiding, "This was all a dream," or, "None of this was real." Each of his surrealistic vignettes was designed to make the viewer consider the consequences of his actions while he still had time to change his ways. Thus, I found the perfect format for my message. It is my sincerest prayer that through your performance of this sketch, someone might come to know Christ.

— JPM

1 *(Stage is dark and empty. The pearly gates are situated at Stage*
 2 *Left. Music with ROB STERLING voice-over plays through.)*

3 **STERLING:** *(Taped or Off-stage)* **This door is unlocked with the**
 4 **key of imagination. It is a dimension of sight, a dimension**
 5 **of sound, a dimension of mind. You are moving into a land**
 6 **of both shadow and substance, of things and ideas. A**
 7 **place between the here and the hereafter. You've just**
 8 **crossed over into — The Twinight Zone.** *(As music fades,*
 9 *adults and children dressed to represent various walks of life*
 10 *enter Stage Right and begin to file toward the pearly gates, where*
 11 *they are admitted, one by one, throughout the sketch. Among*
 12 *them is BILL REYNOLDS. BILL is wearing a baseball cap and*
 13 *carries the pennant of his favorite team. It is obvious that he has*
 14 *come directly from a baseball game.)*

15 **BILL:** *(Stepping Downstage, excited)* **Heaven! I made it. I really**
 16 **made it.** *(As BILL takes his place in the line, interacting with*
 17 *others already there, ROB STERLING enters, Stage Right. He*
 18 *steps Downstage to address audience.)*

19 **STERLING:** **This is Bill Reynolds. He's an average man,**
 20 **leading an average existence in an average town. Bill,**
 21 **like many, has had a good life. Loving father, faithful**
 22 **husband, he's followed all the rules, played by the book.**
 23 **He's friend to many, enemy of none. Yes, one might say**
 24 **that Bill has had a very good life. But now that earthly**
 25 **life is over. As he approaches the gates of heaven, he is**
 26 **confident his place in eternity is assured. But is it? Watch**
 27 **as Bill Reynolds makes his pilgrimage into — The**
 28 **Twinight Zone.** *(STERLING exits. BILL shuffles along with the*
 29 *moving line, obviously pleased. As he does so, he begins to*
 30 *reminisce about his life.)*

31 **BILL:** *(Taking in everything.)* **Wow! I still can't believe I'm really**
 32 **here!** *(Taps lady ahead of him, gestures.)* **Just look at this**
 33 **place. It just goes on and on and on. And everything's so**
 34 **big. Why, if the size of a man's house up here is measured**
 35 **by the contributions he's made on earth —** *(Thinks)* **I**

1 **ought to get a mansion!** (*WOMAN nods, smiles politely, turns*
 2 *back toward gate. BILL is more pleased than ever.*) **Yes sir, a**
 3 **mansion. Who'd've believed it? But then, I *did* make quite**
 4 **a name for myself in the church and community. Why, I**
 5 **taught Sunday school and helped with the canned food**
 6 **drive. Then there was the Scout troop and the Missionary**
 7 **Society.** (*Smiles to himself.*) **I even sang in the church choir**
 8 **last Christmas.** (*Beat*) **Then there were the Bible studies**
 9 **and the building projects, and I always paid my tithe.** (*As*
 10 *they near the gate, BILL spots a young woman with children just*
 11 *about to enter. Sobering*) **I sure am going to miss Maggie and**
 12 **the kids. I couldn't have asked for a better family than the**
 13 **one I had. I wish I could tell them not to worry. I wish I**
 14 **could let them know, somehow, that I made it.** (*At last BILL*
 15 *reaches the gate, which is open to admit someone. He peers*
 16 *ahead.*) **There's a man just inside the gate. He's checking**
 17 **off names as the people pass through. Oh, if only Maggie**
 18 **could be here!** (*At last BILL has reached the gate. With one step*
 19 *yet to go, he lunges boldly forward, only to have the gate clang*
 20 *shut in his face. He panics.*) **Sir! Sir! Open the gate for me!**

21 **VOICE:** (*Off-stage*) **I tell you the truth, I don't know you.** (*BILL*
 22 *is stunned. Dropping his pennant, he turns to leave, then sees*
 23 *that his exit is now blocked by two FIGURES dressed in black.*
 24 *Even their faces are covered. It is evident from his expression that*
 25 *BILL knows who these figures represent. He seeks an escape*
 26 *route, but finds none. The pair seize BILL by the arms and drag*
 27 *him away, kicking and screaming. As they exit Stage Right, ROB*
 28 *STERLING reappears, stepping Downstage to address*
 29 *audience.*)

30 **STERLING:** **Bill Reynolds got more than he bargained for in**
 31 **his date with eternity. For in living his very good life, Bill**
 32 **gave himself to all but *the* One for whom such sacrifice**
 33 **counts most. Unlike most who meet such a fate, Bill**
 34 **Reynolds will be afforded a second chance at his**
 35 **heavenly reward. You see, this was all just a figment of**

1 **Bill's imagination, that illusionary world we call a dream.**
2 **Bill Reynolds will awaken to a renewed or perhaps even**
3 **better life than he had before. But what about you? Are**
4 **you willing to trust that your own journey into the**
5 **hereafter is a mere musing of the subconscious? Or are**
6 **you willing to give your life to the One who gave his own**
7 **so that all might know the security of life eternal? The**
8 **choice is yours. (*Blackout as music comes up.*)**

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People Courts

“Culligan vs. Jason”

Synopsis: A pair of good ol’ boys face the judge when they are sued by their former employer.

Approximate Running Time: 7 to 10 minutes, depending on music effects used.

Setting: Judge Hopper’s courtroom. There is a high judge’s bench at Stage Left, angled to partially face Downstage. There are two small lecterns at Stage Right, angled in reverse to face bench. There is a chair near each lectern.

Cast: Duke Culligan, a good ol’ boy; Bud Culligan, Duke’s younger brother; Frank Jason, plaintiff; Mrs. Pennyworth, Jason’s secretary; Roy Leadbetter, witness for the defense; Lew Allen, host of *People Courts*; Bailiff, resembles “Bull” from *Night Court*, Judge Hopper, presiding judge; Announcer, Off-stage; Voice, Off-stage.

Time: The present.

Costume Suggestions:

Duke Culligan and his brother, Bud, are a couple of good ol’ boys, a la *Beverly Hillbillies*. Their clothing reflects this — they wear worn overalls or duck coveralls, neckerchiefs, shoes with holes in the toes, and hunting caps with the earflaps turned down. They also have a number of teeth blacked out. Tooth blacker is usually available at costume chops.

Roy Leadbetter dresses the same as the Culligans.

Frank Jason wears a dark business suit. He uses crutches and sports a cast on his leg. A cast may be fashioned out of strips of white cloth or durable paper.

Mrs. Pennyworth wears a smart two-piece suit a la Della Street of *Perry Mason* fame. She carries a briefcase.

Lew Allen wears a nicely tailored suit with coordinating tie and pocket square. His hair looks as if he’s just stepped out of a salon.

The Bailiff wears a navy or black shirt and slacks and badge. Since he is supposed to resemble “Bull” from *Night Court*, he should be a big man with a closely shorn haircut.

Judge Hopper wears a black robe. An old graduation robe works best for this.

Props: File of papers, miscellaneous notes, gavel, stack of papers for briefs, hanky, sign with “Windy’s” and an arrow, Bible.



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