

# Double Entendre

**A Musical Comedy in Two Acts**

*Excerpt*

Book, Lyrics & Music  
by  
Chuck Puckett

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**Setting**

A high-tech company in a large city in the "New South".

**Time**

The Present.

ACT I

1.1.1 Overture

SCENE 1

A suspension bridge, TWO MEN standing at the rail. One has a pair of binoculars, and is looking into the middle distance.

AL  
What's he doing now, Larry?

LARRY  
He's standing on the edge. Look's like he's just about ready to jump.

AL  
Jump?!

LARRY  
Any second now, I'd say.

AL  
Jump?!

LARRY  
(takes binoculars from his eyes)  
Listen, Al. Didja hear that?

AL  
Hear what? A splash?

LARRY  
No, dummy. He ain't jumped yet. Didja hear that music?

AL  
I don't hear no music, Larry. What about Matthew? Look again. Is he jumped yet?

LARRY  
(looking through binoculars)  
No, he's still standing there. Just like he's been doing for the last hour. Kinda creepy the way he's just standing there.

1.1.2 "Latham Motif" - underscore

AL  
Hey! I do hear music, Larry. Seems to be coming from under the bridge. What the hell kinda music is that, coming from under a bridge?

LARRY

Al, I don't know what kind of music that is or where it's coming from. All I know is, we're supposed to wait here for this guy Matthew Henderson to either jump or go home, and when he does either one, we're supposed to call this number

**(takes paper from pocket)**

and report what he did. Where the hell is that music coming from?

AL

From under the bridge, Larry. From under this damned bridge!

**A strange figure (LATHAM) climbs over the rail before AL & LARRY's unseeing eyes. He is hairy, bearded, shirtless: hair covers his chest and stomach. He shakes himself, much like an animal. A pipe or recorder hangs from a leather thong around his neck. He looks around, taking no notice of AL & LARRY, takes the pipe from his neck and resumes his tune, walking and occasionally dancing, he exits.**

AL (CONT'D)

Now the music is coming from up here, Larry!

LARRY

**(tapping AL's forehead)**

The music is coming from up here, chowderhead. I don't know where it's coming from, Al.

**(back to binoculars)**

I don't know and I don't care. Right now all I care about is Henderson. Hey! He's getting down from the rail. He's coming this way.

AL

What are we gonna do now, Larry?

LARRY

Shut up! We ain't doing nothing illegal. Just stay put and stay cool.

**MATTHEW HENDERSON, a man in his mid-thirties, enters. He is dressed in sports coat and rumped shirt. He doesn't appear to have had any sleep for days.**

He walks over to the rail where LARRY is standing, leans against it, and stares into space.

MATTHEW

Hello, boys.

He pauses. AL & LARRY look at each other. MATTHEW looks at AL.

MATTHEW (CONT'D)

Are you Larry?

AL

No, I'm Al. He's Larry.

LARRY

Shut up, stupid!

MATTHEW

That's alright, Larry. You look like the bright one. I should have guessed.

LARRY

Guessed what?

MATTHEW

Which one you were. After all, I hired you.

AL

We never saw the guy who hired us. It was all on the phone.

LARRY

Will you please keep your trap shut up? You ain't got crap for brains, Al.

MATTHEW

I said it was okay, Larry. You guys are going to get paid. I'm the one who hired you. Sort of.

LARRY

Whaddaya mean, "sort of"?

MATTHEW

It's a long story, my man. A long and very complicated story.

(looking back from where he entered)

Did ya'll hear that music a little while ago?

AL nudges LARRY.

LARRY

Yeah, we heard some music. Crazy music. What's that got to do with you?

MATTHEW

Nothing. Nothing and everything, I suppose. I guess I looked pretty stupid standing on this rail for an hour, huh?

AL

Yeah, pretty stupid.

**LARRY punches AL.**

AL (CONT'D)

Well, at least you didn't jump. Why not?

MATTHEW

That's a good question. I think the music finally decided me. I can't let that son of bitch win so goddam easily.

AL

Who?

MATTHEW

Me.

AL

You? Who's he?

MATTHEW

Me.

AL

Yeah, You're you. But who's he?

MATTHEW

Me.

AL

Sheeeeh!

LARRY

Listen, buddy, my pal here ain't so bright as me. He can't follow your logic like I can. Some sonofabitch set you up, right?

MATTHEW

Right. Although he's not a total son of a bitch. More like a stepson of a bitch.

LARRY

Uh-huh. Anyway, so you hire us to come out and watch you bite the big one. I don't get it. Why not get us to watch him instead?

MATTHEW

I did. Or rather he did. He hired you. To watch me. And him. Sort of.

LARRY

Oh. Okay. I get it. I wasn't before, but I'm getting it now. I'm getting the hell out of here. Come on, Al.

**(starts to exit)**

MATTHEW

No wait! Let me explain. I've got to tell somebody.

LARRY

You need to tell a shrink, that's who.

MATTHEW

I don't have a shrink. I've got you, and I need to tell somebody tonight, right now. Tomorrow may be too late.

LARRY

Sorry, friend. We got better things to do.

MATTHEW

I'll pay you.

AL

What?

MATTHEW

I've got to pay you for waiting and watching, just like it was arranged. I may as well pay you for sitting and listening instead.

**(reaches for his wallet)**

AL

Well, maybe we ought to listen, Larry. Matthew here's got real problems. He ain't gonna find a shrink at no eight o'clock at night. My momma always wanted me to be a shrink.

LARRY

Your brain is what's shrunk. Okay, we'll listen to your story. But it better be worth what you're paying. And it better be interesting.

**(MORE)**

LARRY (CONT'D)

I'm getting on the sleepy side of my biorhythms.

(yawns)

MATTHEW

It may not be worth anything, Larry. Probably no more than my life is worth by now. But interesting? Yeah, it's interesting, all right. You see, until just a few months ago, things couldn't have been better for me. Life was terrific, full of promises. Only, I didn't know that the promises weren't going to be kept.

**LIGHTS: fade. Voices continue into dark and scene change.**

MATTHEW (CONT'D)

I had a good education, a great apartment, a wonderful girl, a great job... well, it wasn't the perfect job, and I didn't really like it all that much, but it sure as hell paid well.

AL

I almost had a job once. My mama always wanted me to have the perfect job, but this one wasn't perfect, so I kinda let it go on by.

LARRY

Shut up, Al.

**1.1.3 "Working, Waiting, & Wondering" - Scene Change**

**BLACKOUT**

SCENE 2

High-tech office area. Computer terminals on desks; a couple of partitions separate the office into three areas. An office door leads to a private office; Other side of stage is door to hall. A water cooler stands by the door, and a small refrigerator upstage of that. There are several office-type plants in evidence. Posters abound. Coffee cups, printouts, empty pastry containers are on the desks. A sign over the door reads, "Software Development: BYTE-1, Inc.". A clock reads 9:30, but only a single individual is at his desk: CAL BAILEY reads a newspaper, his chair leaned back. His is the office nearest the private office. SOUND: a commotion in private office, and CAL has just enough time to stash the paper and sit up straight and start typing at his terminal. LYNDA WATERS enters from hall, followed by OTTO XAVIER. She is buxomy and friendly, not a rocket scientist. She carries a pad upon which she writes as XAVIER dictates orders. He is portly, not an intellectual. He would feel better with grease on his hands.

LYNDA

Yes, Mr. Xavier. Yessir.

XAVIER

And another thing: write a memo for the whole staff. From now on, I want everyone at work, on time, starting ASAP. I'm tired of seeing empty desks in the morning.

LYNDA

Of course, Mr. Xavier. Where do you want the memo posted, sir?

XAVIER

Oh, the usual hangouts: water cooler, refrigerator, bathrooms. Anywhere but their desks. They'd never see it there.

CAL  
(insuring XAVIER notices)  
Good morning, Mr. Xavier.

XAVIER  
Cal, what are you doing here?

CAL  
I work here, Mr. Xavier.

XAVIER  
I know that. I mean, you're at your desk. I didn't think anybody was at their desk this early.

CAL  
Oh, I'm here every morning, bright and early. Trying to get a little ahead of the game, you know. Nose to the grindstone and all that.

XAVIER  
Really? Well, that's admirable. Why haven't I noticed you here this early before?

CAL  
Probably since my cubicle used to be in another area, Mr. Xavier.

LYNDA  
Cal's desk was just moved to right outside your door, Mr. Xavier. You okayed the request to maintenance.

(winks at CAL)

XAVIER  
I did? Oh, yes, of course I did. Well, great! Keep up the good work, son. There are still some people in this country who appreciate initiative and hard work. Actually, I just appreciate hard work. Come along, Lynda.

(exits into his office)

CAL  
(whispering)  
Thanks for routing that maintenance request around Xavier. This is a great spot.

LYNDA  
Yeah, we're so close. I can just about see you any time.

CAL

Yeah, that too. Well, thanks again. This desk move is my first step to climbing the ol' corporate ladder, and you made it happen.

XAVIER

(offstage)

Lynda!

LYNDA

Gotta go. Don't forget about the dinner you promised me.

CAL

Right. Coming up.

XAVIER

(offstage)

Lynda!

LYNDA exits. CAL smiles, retrieves his paper, and leans back. A few moments pass by, then begin music underneath, as a shabbily dressed DAVY MITCHELL enters, carrying a backpack and dressed in sneakers and sweat clothes. He might be a janitor, but he goes to the middle cubicle and slings his backpack over the chair. He removes some fruit and granola from the pack and spreads it out on the desk. He reaches into the pack and removes a CD player, pops in a CD, puts on the headphones. He begins to sing along as he turns on his computer terminal, makes a cup of coffee, etc. OTHER OFFICE MEMBERS enter during 1st & 2nd verses.

### 1.2.1 "Working, Waiting & Wondering"

#### Working, Waiting, and Wondering

DAVY

UP EVERY MORNING BY NINE OR TEN O'CLOCK  
GOTTA BEAT THE TRAFFIC, GOTTA GET A PARKING SPOT  
GOTTA GET MY BODY GOING' DOWN THAT WORKING ROAD  
SOMETIMES I THINK THAT I'LL PROBABLY EXPLODE  
YEAH I'M WORKING AND WAITING AND WONDERING  
WHERE I'M GONNA GO

CINDY TINKERSLY enters.

CINDY

MAKE A POT OF COFFEE SO I DON'T GO BACK TO SLEEP  
AIN'T NOTHING IN THE WORLD THAT CAN TASTE THIS SWEET  
WHAT WOULD WE DO IF IF WE DIDN'T HAVE A CUP

CINDY & DAVY

BE STANDING AT THE WINDOW GETTING READY TO JUMP  
I'M WORKING AND WONDERING AND WAITING  
'TILL I CAN FILL IT UP

CHORUS

YEAH, LIFE IS A BITCH AND THE WORK'S NO FUN  
ONLY TIME I LIKE IT'S WHEN THE WORK'S ALL DONE  
ONLY TIME I CARE ABOUT IS HALF PAST FIVE  
BUT RIGHT NOW I'M BARELY ALIVE

THIS IS THE LIFE THAT I'M TRYING HARD TO LEAD  
YOU KNOW I DIDN'T CHOOSE IT, BABY, IT CHOSE ME  
I'D CHUNK IT ALL TOMORROW, HITCH MY FORTUNE TO A STAR  
IF I DIDN'T HAVE THE MORTGAGE AND THE KIDS AND THE CAR  
WORKING AND WAITING AND WONDERING  
WHAT'S IT ALL FOR?

**Dance.**

LIFE IS A TANGLE, YOU GET CAUGHT UP IN THE WEB  
LOOK UP A LITTLE LATER, YOU'RE IN OVER YOUR HEAD  
WAKE UP WHEN YOUR SIXTY, BABY IT'S ALL GONE  
RIGHT NOW I'M JUST KEEPING ON  
KEEPING ON JUST KEEPING ON

GIVE ME A SHOT OF JAVA, LET ME SHOOT IT DOWN QUICK  
NO TIME TO TASTE IT, GOT TO GET IT ON THE STICK  
GOT TO GET IN GEAR, GOT MY TAIL IN A SLING  
BUT PLEASE, WHILE I'M WAITING CAN YOU TELL ME ONE THING?  
FOR WHAT AM I WORKING?  
FOR WHAT AM I WAITING?  
I'M REALLY WONDERING  
WHAT THE FUTURE WILL BRING.

**XAVIER, PHILLIP, & CINDY all meet  
downstage. DAVY goes to desk &  
begins work, other OFFICE WORKERS  
exit.**

XAVIER

I'm so glad you could join us this morning,  
Overton. I hope we didn't inconvenience you in  
any way by requiring you to be here as early as-  
**(looks at watch)**  
nine-thirty.

PHILLIP

Oh, no inconvenience at all, Mr. Xavier.

XAVIER

Not that you're any different from any of these other zanies. Nobody gets here before nine o'clock anymore. Except for Bailey, there. Why, when I first started with this company, workers arrived at seven-thirty on the dot, suits pressed, ties tight, shoes shined, ready to work!

CINDY

Now we wear sweat suits, our ties are dyed, our shoes are shot, and we're ready to boogie!

PHILLIP

Mr. Xavier, this wasn't even BYTE-1, Incorporated when you started. It wasn't even a computer company. It was a some kind of marble manufacturing outfit.

XAVIER

Ball bearings, Overton! Ball bearings. Real, honest to God, solid ball bearings. You could touch, 'em, you could feel 'em.

CINDY

No thank you!

PHILLIP

But ball bearings weren't going anywhere. Bascombe's Balls, Inc. had to find a new line of business, Mr. Xavier, a new image.

CINDY

I just wish they'd come up with a better name. BYTE-1 is not a significant improvement over Bascombe's Balls.

PHILLIP

Well, bytes are better than balls, any day. I think. Ball bearings are messy and environmentally distasteful to produce. I'd much rather create software. It sits in the computer, not hurting anything, not taking up any space, absolutely dishwasher safe and one thousand percent biodegradable.

XAVIER

That's what's wrong with this company, with this whole damn country! We don't make anything anymore.

PHILLIP

We make software, Mr. Xavier. Cindy and Davy and all the rest of us. We make computer software.

XAVIER

And what's that? Can you pick it up? Can you weigh it? How much of it is some of it? How can I measure productivity when I can't even see the pro-duct? I don't even know what it is we sell around here.

PHILLIP

We sell whatever the marketing people tell the public they need, Mr. Xavier.

CINDY

Yeah, they convince the consumers that the consumers want something and then they tell us what we were supposed to have been making.

DAVY

**(coming over)**

And then we make whatever it is we wanted to make in the first place. We give whatever that is to the marketing people, and they convince the public that that's what they wanted in the first place! What could be simpler?

XAVIER

Ahhhggg!

DAVY

Hey, Mr. Xavier. I'm not gonna be able to get that fractal analysis display ported to the BYTE-1-2 processor in time for the MEGAPIX demo tomorrow. There's too many bugs in the raster engine, and I don't have a decent debugger on the cross-compiler.

XAVIER

**(looks blankly at DAVY)**

Yes. Ahem. Well do the best you can, Mitchell. Keep up the good work. Let me know when it's done. Whatever it is.

**(beats a hasty retreat into his office)**

CINDY

There goes one worried man.

DAVY

Worried that somebody upstairs is going to figure out that he can't figure out what's going on downstairs.

PHILLIP

What was all that gibberish you were feeding Xavier?

DAVY

Heck if I know. I just wanted to see his face.

CINDY

How the hell did he get to be in charge of this department, anyway?

PHILLIP

His wife was a Bascombe.

CINDY

Oh!

DAVY

Sophie Bascombe became Mrs. Sophie Xavier, and the world's oldest profession lost one of the greatest possibilities of all time.

CINDY

Mrs. Xavier does come on a little strong at times. She's awfully pretty, though.

PHILLIP

Cindy, as a connoisseur of the feminine spirit as well as the feminine frame, I can assure you that she's pretty awful, too.

DAVY

If she ever got her claws into a man, it would be like a tiger ripping into a mouse. Still, it would be a hell of a way to go.

PHILLIP

Anyway, when ball bearings became bytes, most of the ball bearing types got canned. But Mr. Bascombe couldn't find it in his heart to put his son-in-law on the unemployment line. Much as he wanted to. I think.

DAVY

Things will be different when Matthew is made head of software development.

**DAVY covers his mouth and looks at CINDY. PHILLIP gives him a reproachful gaze.**

CINDY

Matthew? What do you mean, Matthew is going to be the head of software?

DAVY

Oh, nothing, really. Did I say something about Matthew? What an idiot I am.

**(goes to water cooler)**

PHILLIP

**(following DAVY)**

A first-class idiot! Davy, I told you the lid was on tight about this. You could ruin everything!

CINDY

**(right behind the others)**

Lid on what? Ruin what?

PHILLIP

**(realizing the cat's out)**

Look, Cindy, you've got to swear to keep this to yourself.

CINDY

I swear! I swear!

PHILLIP

So did Davy.

CINDY

Davy's a flake.

DAVY

Yeah, what are you, a Rice Krispie?

CINDY

I won't tell anybody, Phillip. Now what is this about Matthew? Is he going to get promoted?

PHILLIP

Well, I don't know for sure. All I know is, I was standing by this water cooler last Tuesday. It was lunch time, oh about three in the afternoon. Nobody was in the office, but I'd been playing with the interactive fiction game right on through lunch.

DAVY

Probably the AutoPorno program.

PHILLIP

Hey, there's a lot of great literature in that game. It's based on some of the finest novels ever written.

CINDY

I didn't know they'd made "Debby Does Dallas" into a book.

PHILLIP

Do you want to hear this story or not?

**CINDY nods emphatically.**

PHILLIP (CONT'D)

Well, I was standing by the cooler, see, and I decided I wanted some grapefruit juice, so I went to the fridge, and just as I did, old man Bascombe and Matthew came in the door. They didn't see me, I know, because they went on talking. Bascombe says, "Henderson, it's time BYTE-1 had somebody who really understands software in charge of software. And I think you just might be the man. Think it over, son." Then he shook his hand and left.

DAVY

So they do know upstairs.

CINDY

Then what happened?

PHILLIP

I came out and asked Matthew about it, and he made me swear not to tell anyone. He said nothing was certain yet, and that if everybody found out, and he didn't get the job, it'd make life real uncomfortable in the future.

DAVY

Well everybody will know now. Telling Cindy is like putting it on a billboard on the main ramp to the information superhighway.

CINDY

Hey, big boy! It wasn't me that spilled it to me, you know.

**MATTHEW and LATHAM come in office door. MATTHEW is dressed in a nice suit, and LATHAM has an identical one, only a much flashier tie. LATHAM has a full, almost wild beard and wears sandals. They cross to PHILLIP and the OTHERS.**

PHILLIP

She has a point.

MATTHEW

Cindy has a point? I don't believe it. When did this behavior begin?

PHILLIP

Matthew! Morning, buddy!

MATTHEW

A great good morning to everybody. I feel terrific this morning!

DAVY

Oh, really? Heard any important news recently?

CINDY

Yeah, have you got some reason to feel terrific?

MATTHEW

Nooo, just a great spring morning. Why not just feel good about that?

PHILLIP

Why not, indeed? Matthew, if I were you I'd get on over to my desk and look like I'd been there for a couple of hours. Xavier's on the rampage this morning.

LATHAM

So what? I feel like going to sit by the river and knocking back a bottle of wine.

CINDY

Do what?

MATTHEW

Sitting down at my desk and knocking out some code. Davy, whaddaya say we crack this little BYTE-1-2 problem you've got?

DAVY

Great idea, Matthew.

**They start to go to DAVY'S desk,  
MATTHEW/LATHAM pulls up short.**

LATHAM

On the other hand, I'd like to go find a few other cracks to get into. Know what I mean, Davy?

DAVY

No.

LATHAM

I guess you wouldn't.

DAVY

What's that crack supposed to mean?

MATTHEW

What crack? Come on, let's get to work.

DAVY

Matthew, you're cracking up.

MATTHEW

What's that crack supposed to mean?

CINDY

Matthew, are you sure you feel alright this morning? Maybe you ought to take the day off.

MATTHEW

I'm fine.

LATHAM

I just haven't been myself lately.

MATTHEW

You can say that again.

DAVY

Say what again?

MATTHEW

**(sits)**

Maybe this job is more of a pressure cooker than I thought. Maybe I can't do this stuff as well as everybody thinks I can.

PHILLIP

Give me a break! You understand computers better than anybody at BYTE-1, better than anybody in this town!

DAVY

Yeah! When it comes to software, you know every bit, every byte and every bug that anybody ever came up with.

PHILLIP

Matthew, you're the tops. Nobody's better.