

The stage is split into three areas with reception desk, outside telephone booth, and city employees' spot respectively. Public Works, Parks, City Solicitor and Mayor wear masks. On opening the Receptionist is discovered leaning against her desk, engaged in a non-work pursuit such as painting fingernails. Enter Arnold, limping; he steps into the phone booth and, after dropping in a coin, dials. Phone rings at reception desk.

RECEPTION

Thank you for calling city hall. How may we help you?

ARNOLD

Hello. I've got a situation here... a... a request actually... and it's urgent.

RECEPTION

I'm listening.

ARNOLD

Twenty minutes ago I was on my way to the lottery centre to cash in a five hundred dollar ticket, when—

RECEPTION

Ooh, lucky you!

ARNOLD

When I tripped on a broken piece of pavement, and the ticket... it just flew out of my—

RECEPTION

You tripped on the pavement? Oh my! Now that sounds like Public Works. Just one moment, please, and I'll connect you.

(Pushes buttons.)

ARNOLD

But you don't under—

PUBLIC WORKS

Yeah, Public Works. What's the problem?

ARNOLD

I was just trying to explain to that woman that I tripped on some broken pavement and lost my five-hundred-dollar lottery ticket in a dumpster—

PUBLIC WORKS

Five hundred bucks? Wow!

ARNOLD

Yes, but—

PUBLIC WORKS

And you tripped, did ya?

ARNOLD

It was a piece of broken pavement, and you couldn't see it—it was in the shade... But that isn't the—

PUBLIC WORKS

Where was this, now? Was the paving marked? Like highlighted?

ARNOLD

I didn't notice! What I want to complain about is that when the ticket flew up into the dumpster I climbed up to retrieve it and—

PUBLIC WORKS

Dumpsters ain't our department. You need to talk to the contractor who—

ARNOLD

(Loudly.)

To retrieve it, and a city truck turned the corner and bumped the dumpster and I fell in, and—

PUBLIC WORKS

You gotta be kidding!

ARNOLD

And the lid came down and the dumpster rolled into a tree.

PUBLIC WORKS

A tree? Oh, well, we're talkin' Parks here. Hang on now, I'll transfer you to Parks.

(Pushes buttons.)

RECEPTION

Thank you for calling city hall. How may we help you?

PUBLIC WORKS

Hey, Ethel, I got some kook here, ran a dumpster into a tree. Will ya transfer this to Parks?

RECEPTION

Sure, Reg, you got it.

(Pushes buttons.)

PARKS

Good morning. Parks and green growing things. What is your pleasure?

ARNOLD

I was just telling that man in Public Works that I was in a dumpster when a city truck hit it and made it run into a tree. Now—

PARKS

I hope it wasn't an oak or a Japanese plum tree! Was there much damage?

ARNOLD

I really don't know, and I don't care a lot either. Now, look young lady [man], I lost my lottery ticket through all this, and it was worth five hundred dollars!

PARKS

Don't get mad at me. I'll have to go out and check the injury. Some of these Japanese plums are getting pretty old, and a shock like that could—

ARNOLD

Look! I don't care about trees or pavements or dumpsters. I want my ticket back. So what are you going to do about it—that's what I want to know. And my back is almost broken where the dumpster lid came down on it. I'm looking for some help here.

PARKS

Okay, okay. I can see you have problem here. I'm really sorry you hurt your back. I think you should be talking to the city solicitor. Hold on.
(Pushes buttons.)

ARNOLD

(Aside.)

Good. This is beginning to sound more promising.

RECEPTION

Thank you for calling city hall. How may we help you?

PARKS

Hello, Ethel. So, how's that rhododendron doing? Last time we talked, you said it was shedding.

RECEPTION

I followed your advice, and it's perked right up. I should have talked to you weeks ago. You are a clever one. What can I do for you today, dear?

PARKS

Got a fellow on the line; kind of a mixed-up story. By the way, don't use that fertilizer on your house plants; it won't do them any good.

RECEPTION

Well, they're not much good anyway. I kill houseplants. What about the guy you've got on the line.

PARKS

Oh, right. I think he'd better talk to Legal. Okay?

RECEPTION

Sure, honey. Anything for the tree people!
(Pushes buttons.)

SOLICITOR

City solicitor here. What seems to be the problem?

ARNOLD

I lost a five-hundred-dollar lottery ticket because a city truck pushed a dumpster with me in it into a tree, and my back hurts... a lot.

SOLICITOR

Well, now, that's quite a story. Perhaps a little too brief? If you could begin at the beginning, please. But, first, may I have your name and usual mailing address?

ARNOLD

Arnold Klotz, 1023 Murphy Drive, and I want—

SOLICITOR

How long have you lived at this address?

ARNOLD

Forever.

SOLICITOR

Do you rent or own?

ARNOLD

What?

SOLICITOR

Do you have a current valid driver's license? Oh, yes, and are you in good health? On any medication at this time?

ARNOLD

I was in excellent health, both mental and physical, before this happened. And why the driver's license? I was transported against my will in the dumpster—I wasn't driving the damn thing!

SOLICITOR

Now really, Mr. Klotz, there is no call to become defensive, or abusive. I merely require the information in order to open a file on this... er... unfortunate occurrence.

ARNOLD

I am sick and tired of getting the run-around from one blasted bureaucrat to another. I don't plan on suing anyone, for God's sake. I just want my five hundred dollars! Is that clear?

SOLICITOR

That is as it may be. However, we have our procedures here, and I do require adequate—

ARNOLD

No, you don't. Let me talk to somebody who can make decisions over there, someone in charge.