

TEACHER

- 2 cats
- rocking chair
- sign
- wallet
- \$5 white
- stained map
- straw hats
- black hats
- ties 2

A Couple of Right Smart Fellows

Matthew

Michael (from off stage) Brother Zack? You out there? (Zeke enters left.) Now, where did he go off to? I'd've sworn he were a-sectin' right there a minute ago. (Zack enters right, carrying a wooden sign reading TURN-PIKE 5 MILES) Oh, there you are Zack. Where, you been?

Quinton Zack: One o'them state highway crews went by a few minutes ago and tacked up another one o' them signs o'theirs.

Zeke Took it down, did you?

Zack: Yep. Long as they keep a-puttin'em up on our property 'thout payin' rent, I intend to keep takin' em down.

Zeke What do you plan to do with it?

Zack: I'll put it out in the barn, I reckon, 'long with the rest of 'em. Must be purt' near forty of 'em out there by this time, Zeke. Almost enough to put a new roof on the house.

Zeke It'll be the only roof in the village that says "five miles to the turnpike" forty times, I reckon.

Zack: Not after I paint it, it won't.

zeke Wonder why the highway folks keep puttin' up signs. (Sits in rocker)

Zack: Don't want folks to get lost, I reckon. (Leans sign against side of straight chair and sits in other rocker.)

Zeke I think it's kind o'nice when folks get lost. Makes things a mite more sociable.

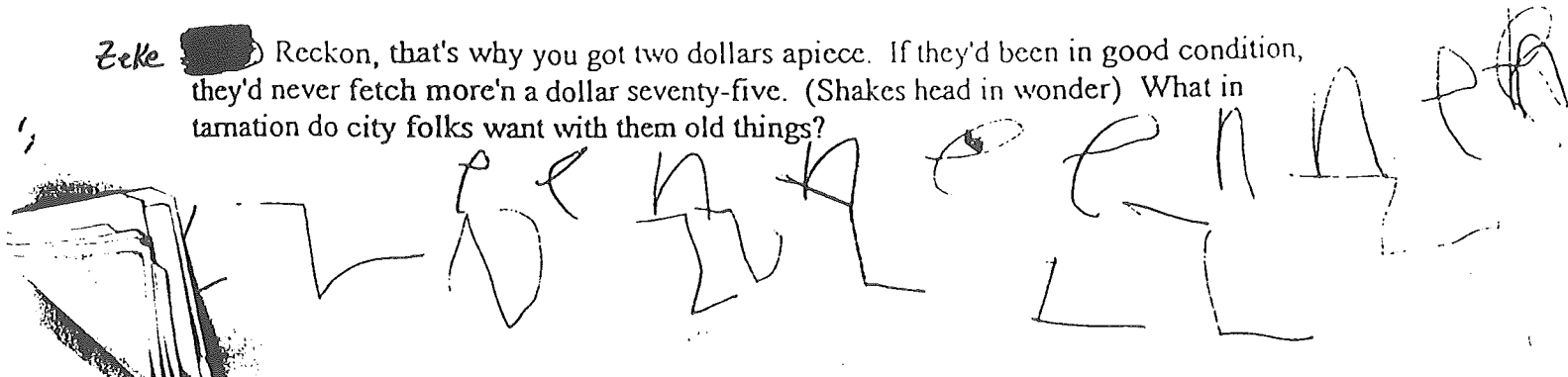
- Zack: By-cracky, I think there's someone comin' now who just got lost. Leastways, a truck full of old furniture and a couple of fellers in city clothes just pulled off the road.

* enter

Zeke Must be a couple o'them antiequey dealers. Anythin' left out in the barn we kin sell em!

Zack Nope. Sold the last o'the milk cans last night. Got two dollars apiece for 'em. (Smiling) They were the oldest, rustiest milk cans in the country.

Zeke Reckon, that's why you got two dollars apiece. If they'd been in good condition, they'd never fetch more'n a dollar seventy-five. (Shakes head in wonder) What in tarnation do city folks want with them old things?



Zack: At two dollars apiece, I am not askin' any questions. (looks off right) Yep, looks like we got a couple o' callers. (Harris and Carter enter from right. They are mopping their brows with their handkerchiefs. Zeke and Zack rock calmly.)

Harris: (calling) Hey, there, old-timers-

Zeke (slowly) Howdy!

Zack: Howdy!

Harris: Is this the road to the turnpike?

Zeke) Nope. This here's the front yard of our farm. Ain't no road up here a-tall.

Harris: (irritated) No, no. (points off) I mean that road down there.

Zack: Then why didn't you say so, young feller?

ramarie) Carter: Let me handle this, Harris. You're always losing your temper. (Turns to Zeke and Zack) What my partner and I want to know is where does the road go?

Zeke) Don't go nowheres, far as I know. That right. Brother Zack?

Zack: Yep. Allus been right where it is.

Carter: No, no, no. What we mean is, can you give us directions? We're trying to get to New York.

Zeke) Don't reckon I know how to get to New York.

Carter: Well, then, can you tell us how to get to Hartford?

Zeke) Don't reckon I know how to get to Hartford.

Carter: (irritated) You don't know much, do you?

Zeke) (calmly) Nope. But I ain't lost.

Zack: You fellers antiequey dealers?

manda) Harris: (Eagerly) Why, yes, yes, we are. Anything you'd care to sell? Furniture? Silver?

Carter: (hopefully) Milk cans?

Zack: Nope. 'Fraid not. We're all cleaned out.



Harris: (disappointed) You're sure? Not even an old sampler?

Zeke [redacted] Did have a sampler, but a feller talked me into selling it to him last week. Done by my Great-aunt Maudie, back in 1837. Sure hated to give it up: But the feller was awful persuasive. Way he talked; I just couldn't refuse him.

Carter: Why? What did he say?

Zeke [redacted] He said, "Five dollars."

Harris: (outraged) You let him buy an authentic 1837 sampler for five dollars? Why, those things are worth ten times that!

Zack: (opening his eyes wide) Do tell. (Innocently) All that money for somethin' that just hangs on the wall?

Harris: You'd be surprised how valuable something that just hangs on the wall can be.

Zack: Well, ain't that interestin'. Brother Zeke?

Zeke [redacted] Learn somethin' new every day. Brother Zack.

* Zack: You antiequey dealers sure are smart fellers.

Carter: (to Harris, irritated) Are you going to stand here making chitchat with a couple of hayseed farmers all day, Harris, or are we going to get back on the road?

Harris: Oh, yes. Can either of you gentlemen give us directions to the turnpike?

Zeke [redacted] Oh, is that what you wanted to know? Why, sure we kin! Fact is, we kin give you two sets o'directions, 'cause there's two ways o'gettin' there.

Carter: (smiling) Just one way will be enough for us, thanks.

Zeke [redacted] (rising) Let's see now. Well, you take you next right: - that's Happy Valley Road. Go down there for about a mile and a quarter, and turn right when you see a barbed wire fence with some tiger lilies growin' on the outside of it. That'll be a dirt road. Now, you stay on that till you pass the third left. Turn there, go on for about six and a quarter miles - or maybe it's more like eight miles. Anyway, go right at the fork in the road, and go up there apiece till you pass the graveyard. When you get to the graveyard, you'll know you went too far, so turn around and go back a ways till you get to Gallows Lane. Take your second right, then your third left then your second left. Go on to the fourth stop sign, just after the railroad crossing, turn left, go three and eight-tenths miles, turn right, and the tumpike'll be straight ahead of you. You can't miss it!

Harris: (awestruck) Did you get that, Carter?

Carter: (dazed) Isn't there a shorter way'

Zeke [redacted] Yep.

Carter: (exploding) Then why didn't you tell me so in the first place?

Zeke [redacted] You didn't ask.

Harris: I just don't understand it. What's wrong with the highway department around here? I'm sure there must be a turnpike sign somewhere in the neighborhood!

Zeke [redacted] (coughing) Er, Brother, Zack, isn't it about time you took that piece o'new lumber out to the barn?

Zack: What's that? Oh! Oh, yeah, Brother Zeke: I reckon you're right. (He picks up the sign, turning it so Carter and Harris can't read it, and carries it off right.)

Carter: Now, about that shortcut.....

Zeke [redacted] Well, now, come to think of it, I've got a map o' the shortcut. Yep, a beautiful state highway map that shows just how to git to the turnpike from here.

Harris: (happily) That's marvelous! Could we look at it?

Zeke [redacted] Well, now. I don't know. You see, I got it taped up on the wall in my bedroom. There's a water spot in the wallpaper, and that map sure comes in handy for coverin' it up.

Carter: (Exasperated) Well, surely you can let us take a look at it!

Zeke [redacted] Maybe I could be persuaded to

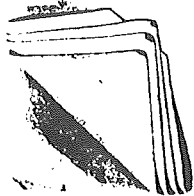
Carter: (Getting the message) You sure don't miss a trick, do you? All right, I'll give you a dollar for the map.

Zeke [redacted] Five dollars.

Carter: (Exploding) Five dollars for a piece of paper you're using to cover up a stain in your wallpaper? That's outrageous!

Zeke [redacted] (Dryly) You'd be surprised how valuable somethin' that just hangs on the wall can be.

Harris: (Exasperated) Oh, give the man five dollars, Carter, so we can find our way out of here. (Paces about)



5

Carter: (Grimly) All right, then. Five dollars for the map.

Zeke [redacted] (Holding out his hand) In advance, o'course. (Carter, furious, hands bill to Zeke, who takes it and exits left. Harris watches his until he is out of sight, then turns to Carter.)

Harris: (In low, urgent voice) Carter!

Carter: What is it?

Harris: (Eagerly) While you and that hayseed were talking, I happened to notice something. Look at that chair - the one the cat's sleeping in.

Carter: (Doing a double take.) Good grief! Is it-is it-?

Harris: Yes! An authentic Sheppplewhite Fitchcock chair!

Carter: And in perfect condition! Why-do you know what that chair is worth?

Harris: I know the Metropolitan Museum paid sixteen thousand dollars for one that wasn't nearly as good!

Carter: Do you think these old farmers know what they've got here?

Harris: (Gloatingly) Not a chance! Didn't he say he had nothing of any value to sell?

Carter: Offer him fifty bucks for it. He'll jump at it!

Harris: No, no, no! That'd be too obvious if I offer him money for the chair, he'll smell a rat, and that'll push the price up.

Carter: But if you don't offer him money-

Harris: (Tapping his head; shrewdly) Psychology, Carter, Psychology. You've got to use your head when you're dealing with these simple peasant types. Just leave it to me.

Zack: (Re-entering, right) You fellers still here? Where's Brother Zeke?

Harris: Oh, he went into the house to get us a map. And while he's been gone, my partner and I have been admiring your cat here, haven't we, Carter?

Carter: (Blankly) Cat?

Harris: Yes, that darling little kitty-cat sleeping on that rickety old good-for-nothing broken-down chair.

Carter: (Understanding) Oh, that cat.

Harris: And we were wondering, my partner and I, whether you'd consider selling her. We think that is the most beautiful little kitty-cat we've ever seen. We just must have her, mustn't we, Carter?

Carter: Oh, yes, yes!

Zack: Well, I reckon you'll have to ask Brother Zeke about that. It's his cat.

Zeke [redacted] (Entering left with map) Someone mention my name? (To Carter) Here's your map, young feller.

Zack: Seems these fellers are interested in buyin' your cat, Zeke.

Zeke [redacted] (Horried) What? Sell old Puss-Cat, that's been in the family for fifteen years? Why, Puss is like our own flesh and blood. We couldn't live without her. (Cynically) How much'll you give?

Harris: (Hopefully) Ten dollars?

Zeke (Firmly) Fifteen.

Harris: Ten-fifty.

Zack: (In auctioneer's tones) I have ten-fifty, ten-fifty. Who'll say eleven?

Carter: (Eagerly) Eleven!

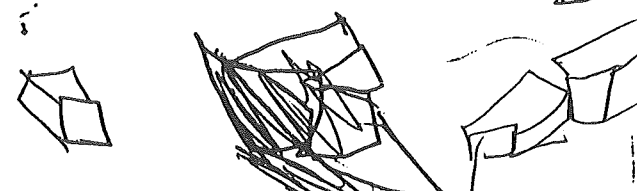
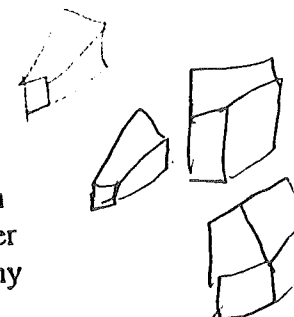
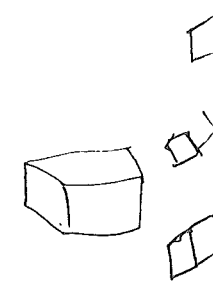
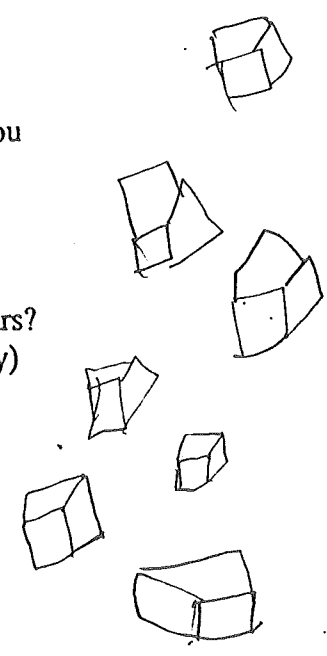
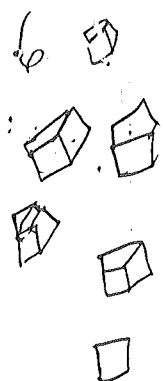
Zack: Eleven! Do I hear twelve? Twelve? Will anyone bid twelve?

Harris: Twelve!

Zack: (Slapping his hands together) Sold! To the sucker in the - I mean, the gentleman in the blue suit, for twelve dollars. (Zeke holds out his hand. Harris takes out wallet, counts out bills, hands them the Zeke. Zack picks up sleeping cat and places it in Harris's arms.)

Zeke [redacted] Just twelve dollars for old Pus-cat! You antiequey dealers sure are right smart fellers!

Harris: (Pretending to get a sudden thought) Say! This kitty-cat looked so peaceful on the rickety old good-for-nothing broken-down chair. I'm sure she'd want it to go with her to her new home. I'll give you fifty cents for the chair. (Casually) Not that it's worth any thing, of course, but just to make Puss-cat happy.



Zeke [redacted] Nope. No sale.

Harris: (Taken aback) I suppose I shouldn't, bit-well, all right, I'll give you a dollar. Only to make Puss-cat happy.

Zeke [redacted] Nope.

Harris: Two dollars?

Carter: Five dollars?

Harris: Ten dollars?

Zeke [redacted] (Still shaking his head) Sorry, but that chair ain't for sale a-tall. Not at any price.

Harris: (Disgusted) Why not?

Zeke [redacted] That's my lucky chair. Every antiequey dealer that stops here buys a cat off that chair for at least ten dollars. Why, your is the third cat I've sold this week. (He goes off left, returns at once with another cat, and puts it on chair.) There, there, kitty. Take a nice nap while you can. The way things are goin', you'll be sold to a new owner inside o'fifteen minutes!

Carter: (To Harris, in disgust) You and your psychology! You're now the proud owner of a twelve dollar barn cat. Come on, let's get out of here before you decide to buy another one. (They start off)

Zeke [redacted] (Rocking gently in his chair) So long, strangers! Good o'you to drop in.

Zack: (Likewise) Yep, you be sure an' come see us again some time, hear?

Harris: (Sarcastically as he and Carter exit) Yes, we'll do that.

Zeke [redacted] Hmm-m. They didn't seem too friendly, did they. Brother Zack?

Zack: Nope, can't say as they did. Well, maybe the next bunch that stops'll be nicer.

Zeke [redacted] (Looking off right) I hear an engine now. Think it's some more right smart antiequey fellers lookin' for the turnpike?

Zack: (Rising and looking off) Nope. I'll be danged it ain't the state highway crew, come to put up another sign!

8.

Zeke

(Rocking slowly) Well, ain't they the friendly ones? After the roof gets finished, we can start building us a new barn! (He and Zack chuckle and continue to rock. Curtain.)

before Christmas

THE END

*ca.
1911
map*