

The
Regular
Guys

A Novel

By

Gaylon Kent

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GaylonKent.net

@GaylonKent

For regular guys everywhere

For Marian

*U.S. Highway 86
Outside A Medium Sized Town
Somewhere in the Midwest*

Lenny looked in his rear view mirror, saw the police car's blue, yellow and red lights flashing and, despite Biblical prohibition against doing so, uttered the first and last names of the human form of the Christian triumvirate.

"What the hell's going on here? I wasn't going a hair over 90!"

Larry, sitting in the passenger's seat of Lenny's car, started laughing as Lenny, still violating the terms of the Second Commandment, pulled his car over to the side of the highway. He leaned over a bit and rubbed his forehead with his left hand, as if he had one of those tension headaches you used to see in TV commercials Year's ago. An officer got out of the car and walked toward Lenny's car. She approached the car, stopping just behind Lenny so if Lenny had a gun drawn it would be harder to shoot her.

"Good evening men," the officer said. "My name is Ann and I'll be your citing officer this evening. May I see your driver's license, registration and proof of insurance please, sir?"

"May I see your driver's license, registration and proof of insurance, sir?" Lenny echoed sarcastically. "What if I said 'No, you may not see my driver's license, registration and proof of insurance'? In fact, what if everyone who was pulled over refused to show their driver's license, registration and proof of insurance. What would you do then? Your scam would be over. Over!"

Larry laughed and the officer smiled.

Lenny then proceeded to search for his driver's license, registration and proof of insurance.

The cop took in the guy in front of him; he was kind of cute. A little pudgy perhaps, but she liked his black hair that was kind of curly and a tad thin on top and his otherwise friendly face.

"I'd have to arrest you, then, sir," she said. "And that means more paperwork than either of us really wants."

"Here," Lenny said, proffering the requested papers in both his hands, as if he were trying to hand her a fistful of dollar bills. "I've even included a blood print and my last five tax returns."

Lenny was annoyed because he and Larry weren't all that far from their destination, a dive lounge in a hotel in a medium-sized town a couple of hours from their home in the Midwest where he and Larry, in their role as Professional Comedians, were going to perform the next couple of nights.

"Do you know how fast you were going, sir?" the officer asked.

"No, I don't know how fast I was going," Lenny said. "If I did we wouldn't be having this conversation, would we, ma'am?" Lenny turned and looked at the lousy fuzz that had pulled him over. He saw a lady a bit younger than him, cute with short blonde hair. She had a pretty, whole-some face. Her nametag said her last name was 'Shelton'.

"You know, Officer Shelton, I am bigger than you. What if I were to strike the classic martial pose and yell "HI-EEEE!" To emphasize his point Lenny brought his hands, palms open, in front of his face in what he supposed was the classic martial arts position. He really had no clue if this was the classic martial arts position, or even if such a position existed, because Lenny knew squat about martial arts.

"I'd have to shoot you, sir," Officer Shelton said.

"That would rule," Larry said. "Could you just graze him though, he's my ride home?"

"Perhaps, sir, " Officer Shelton said. "We prefer shots that actually penetrate the suspect to flesh wounds, however. Makes them less able to resist."

"Uh-oh. Better do what she says then, Lenny."

Lenny looked at Larry like he had just sprouted a third eye. "Why don't you shut up?" Lenny asked.

Larry laughed again. So did Officer Shelton for that matter.

"We had you clocked at 92, sir," Officer Shelton said.

"We? Who's we?" Lenny said turning his head left and right. "You on patrol with Reid and Malloy?" Lenny and Officer Shelton made eye contact. Lenny winked at her.

Officer Shelton laughed. "Where are you two headed that you need to get there yesterday?"

"The next town," Larry said. "There's a world class resort there that's expecting us to make people laugh the next couple of nights."

"World class resort? In the next town?" Officer Shelton was momentarily confused because she lived in the next town. Not only that, she had grown up there, gone to school and was now, after having successfully completed the required training, a deputized officer of the law there.

"Oh, you mean the Ramada Inn. Yeah, that's world class. You're not playing that dumpy dive off the lobby are you?"

"Along with Marvin the Mediocre Hypnotist," Larry confirmed. "And the Precision Broom Brigade."

Lenny started to get annoyed with Larry, who he felt was mocking their weekend's work, which he was, of course. Lenny had been trying to hit it big as a comedian for Year's with somewhat less than incredible success. Or any success, really.

Lenny didn't know much about Larry, who he was just giving a ride to to break up the monotony of the drive. He had been on a few of the same bills as Larry, who had just started on the comedy racket. Lenny had no idea what Larry used to do before he got into the comedy racket; though they were hardly strangers, and Larry didn't talk much about himself in the time they had spent together.

"We are booked into the main show room at the Ramada, yes, Officer Shelton." Lenny said, making the gig sound like they were on their way to Carnegie Hall. He was after all, a professional entertainer on his way to his next performance. Or was, until Officer Shelton pulled them over.

"I've worked security there when I've had a night off," she said. "Wait here while I go make sure you're not on the Most Wanted List."

"Great," Lenny said when she was out of earshot. "A ticket from a cute cop. Just what I need."

"I think she likes you, Lenny."

"Shut up. She does not."

"OK," Officer Shelton said, leaning into the window. "HQ reports you don't need to be shot on sight and are not an immediate menace to society, which I highly doubt, but I need to reach my quota so I am going to issue you a ticket anyway. But I'm only going to cite you for going ten miles per hour over the speed limit. It's a lot better legally than the 47 miles per hour over you were doing."

Lenny graciously muttered his thanks as Officer Shelton finished writing the ticket.

"Here," she said handing Lenny her clipboard. "Sign where the X is. Signing is not an admission of guilt."

"What is it then," Lenny asked. "A declaration of innocence?"

"Actually, it just means you'll appear in court on the agreed upon date, or pay the fine beforehand."

"Lenny, how about as a token of your appreciation for Officer Shelton's not sending you to death row you get her comps for tonight's show at the main show room at the Ramada Inn?" Larry sounded as if he were telling a child to write a thank you note for a birthday present.

"How about as a token for providing ground transportation you shut your trap?" Lenny said, which caused both Larry and Officer Shelton to start laughing again.

Lenny considered the matter for a second. "You think we could get comps?"

"I think so. What are they gonna say, no?"

"Officer Shelton, if I were to issue you said 'comp' – which I am NOT ready to do yet - would you attend?"

Officer Shelton leaned on the door and peered through the open window. Lenny could smell a faint trace of some fancy-schmancy, high quality soap. He liked that. "Well, I've got some old ladies to cite for jaywalking later, but I suppose I could break free. Assuming the offer is graciously extended and not an attempt to influence a duly deputized officer of the law in the performance of her duties."

"Officer Shelton!" Larry exclaimed in mock horror. "I am appalled! Appalled! We are merely trying to offer a hard working law enforcement professional a complimentary evening of entertainment. You're a hero now, don't forget."

"My ass she's a hero" Lenny said. "She gave me a ticket. What's so heroic about that?"

"People like you should be behind bars," Larry said condescendingly, looking down his nose at Lenny.

"You charmer. OK, I'll be there," Officer Shelton said.

"Bring your handcuffs," Lenny said, winking at her again before driving off.

Ramada Inn Lounge
A Medium Sized Town in the Midwest

At the Ramada Inn lounge, depressingly named Impressions or Reflections or some such nonsense, Lenny and Larry took the stage, separately, as scheduled. Neither could remember the name of whatever it was they were appearing at, but that was all right. They had been paid their agreed fee at the appointed time, their rooms were ready, if not completely resplendent, when they arrived, the crowd was pretty good and they were pleased.

After the evening's revels were complete Ann joined them at the bar. Both Lenny and Larry's sets were done and the show was over. Nearby members of The Precision Broomstick Brigade were signing autographs.

Ann, no longer in uniform, was wearing a sheer black blouse that had enough flower patterns so that plenty was left to the imagination. She also wore jeans and clogs, not that Lenny noticed - because he didn't because he was using his imagination while staring at Ann's breasts.

"Hey, you two," Ann Shelton said. "Thanks for the ticket; you're both pretty funny. You should be behind bars, so nice to see you when you're not breaking the law."

Lenny and Larry both laughed and greeted Ann in the manner pre-scribed by Anglo-Saxon custom.

"You know," Ann said. "You two should really perform together. You'd make a nice team."

Lenny and Larry looked at each other as if she had suggested Lenny and Larry enjoy sexual congress with a yak. To really show his surprise, Lenny raised one eyebrow up, which annoyed Larry because he couldn't do it.

The idea, evidently, had not occurred to them.

"I mean, not that you're not doing well on your own. You're shtick in the car was really funny though."

Lenny and Larry again looked at each other. Larry was intrigued by the idea; Lenny was not.

"You gotta be kidding. Work together?" Lenny said.

"Why not?" Larry said.

"Because it's a stupid idea, that's why. Nobody wants to see two comedians at the same time."

"Well, it's not as if the old Ramada Inn here isn't great," Ann said. "We all know it is, but, you know, it isn't going to be confused with the Improv."

Lenny nodded, as if she was stating the obvious, and surveyed the room around him; typical small town stuff.

"Stick with me baby, and someday all this will be yours" he said, trying, and succeeding to some degree, to sound like Humphrey Bogart.

Ann laughed.

"Well, heck, even if you don't, you're still comedians hitting the road, right out there on the edge, especially at 92 miles per hour."

"Actually, we're not really edgy people," Lenny said.

"No," Larry confirmed. "We're just regular guys."

Ann laughed, held her arms out to her side and looked at them expectantly, as if she was expecting a light bulb to go off.

It never did.

"Are you guys dense? There's your name!"

"What name?" Lenny asked.

"Your stage name, silly: The Regular Guys."

(Two)

Lenny and Larry were driving home after their gig. Larry had brought up Ann Shelton's idea about working together.

"It'll never work," Lenny said.

"Why not?" Larry asked.

"Come on, how many comedy teams are there nowadays?"

"I dunno. Why does that matter?"

"Because," Lenny said, as if that settled it.

"Oh, well, I guess that's it then."

Neither man said anything for a minute or so.

"Look, it doesn't really make sense," Lenny said.

"Lenny, we're on the same bill as the Precision Broom Squadron."

"Brigade. They're the Precision Broom Brigade."

"Oh sorry," Larry said out of the habit all who are raised Lutheran have of apologizing incessantly. Then he realized what he apologized for.

"Blow me," Larry said, pushing Lenny in the arm. "My point is, we're both working regularly, but gee whiz, when you follow the Precision Broom Platoon...."

"Brigade; they're a brigade! And I am following them. When I'm opening for them, then I've got problems."

Larry chuckled and never did finish the sentence he had started.

Lenny had to acknowledge the basic truth of that unfinished statement, however. Though he did work clubs in big cities from time to time, there were enough county fairs and small town gigs sprinkled in to remind him The Tonight Show wasn't on the horizon. Lenny was beginning to recognize a career that wasn't going anywhere when he saw one.

He sighed audibly.

"You think we'd be good together?"

Larry shrugged. "Maybe, maybe not. I think we should try it out, just for funsies."

"Just for funsies? You'd make a major career decision just for fun-sies?"

"Sure," Larry said dismissively. "What the hell. You've gotta roll the dice sometimes."

"What the hell!!!!??? We're talking about working together based on 'what the hell'? No! We're not talking about it; you're talking about it. I'm ignoring it! In fact, I'm creating a force field to block out this nonsense."

Lenny started singing the chorus from Achy Breaky Heart. Larry covered his head in his hands as if he were being assaulted by pepper spray, which aurally speaking, he was. This continued on for a few seconds, after which Lenny shut down his force field. A little later he pulled off the highway to get some gas. Larry joined him in line in the mini mart.

"Lenny, lighten up." Larry said at the cash register. "It's only our careers. If it doesn't work you can always hook up with the Precision Broom Corps."

"For the last time," Lenny said, doing a really good job of pretending to be angry. "They are a brigade. A brigade."

Larry laughed. As they walked back to the car he was thinking they'd be pretty funny together. Lenny, in a revelation on par with conversion of St. Paul, was starting to think so too.

"Well, give it some thought," Larry said as they started car back up and continued home. "We don't have to decide anything right now."

The two drove in silence for a while.

"On the other hand," Lenny said. "Nothing else I've tried so far has worked. What do we have to lose?"

"That's the spirit!" Larry said. "A positive attitude is half the battle."

"You've actually thought about this before?"

"Not until Ann mentioned it. It seems pretty logical though."

"What if I was a safe driver and we never met Ann?"

"It would've come to one of us eventually, probably when you started opening for the Precision Broom Outfit..."

"Dammit, they're a brigade! A brigade!" Lenny said smiling.

"...instead of following them. Then you'd be at rock bottom and ready to give anything a try."

"Well, this ain't rock bottom. I don't think I've actually been there, but I hardly think this is it."

"We could try it once or twice. If it doesn't work, it doesn't work. Who knows where it will take us?"

3

Lenny's Apartment

A Big City in the Midwest

A week or so passed, and one day Larry found himself sitting in Lenny's living room. Lenny, having decided he was now in possession of a career that wasn't going anywhere, had relented somewhat on the idea of working with a partner. He wasn't ready to run out and get Lenny and Larry t-shirts made up, but he was able to discuss the matter without creating force fields.

"What are we going to do for material?" Lenny asked, logically.

"Material's overrated," Larry said. "We can wing it."

"Wing it?" Lenny said as if Larry had recommended Lenny stick a pencil in his ear. "Wing it?"

“Sure, it’s boring reciting the same lines every night; any idiot can do that; we do it every night. If we wing it we can be fresh every night.”

“If we wing it we can be boring every night. It’ll never work,” Lenny said dismissively. “Who the hell wants to hear two losers winging it? We’ll last five minutes.”

Larry heard the sound of what appeared to be a muffled phone ring. Lenny reached into his pocket and fished out his phone. He looked at the screen, saw who was calling, and uttered a vulgar term for poop. It was Lenny’s girlfriend of several Year’s.

Larry only got Lenny’s side of the conversation, but he did have the benefit of being able to watch Lenny’s body language. It wasn’t pretty; Lenny was reacting as if someone were trying to poison him.

Lenny actually didn’t talk much. After a couple-three minutes Lenny said “No, I am not doing that” and “We’ve been through this before!” sternly before yanking the phone from his ear; he looked as if he wanted to hang it up before realizing it was a mobile and turning it off and throwing it into a chair a couple of feet from where Larry was sitting.

Lenny sat slouched; he looked defeated.

“That didn’t sound like a happy conversation,” Larry said.

“It wasn’t. They haven’t been for a while.”

Larry was too Lutheran to ask any questions. If Lenny wanted him to know anything, he’d tell him.

Lenny got up, walked to the kitchen, which wasn’t really a hike in his small apartment, got a surprisingly good bottle of Scotch out and made himself a drink. He poured one for Larry too, even though he had no idea whether or not Larry wanted a drink.

“Here,” Lenny said putting the drink on the coffee table in front of him. “I suppose I could’ve asked if you wanted one or not.”

“That’s all right. I enjoy a good scotch every now and then.” Larry, God bless him, couldn’t tell good scotch from Drano, but in the finest Lutheran tradition he meant well.

“This is good stuff. Single malt, from the highlands.”

Larry nodded knowingly, as if that were readily apparent to any idiot. He did not, in fact, know what a single malt from the highlands was and would’ve been hard pressed to tell the difference between that and a double malted from the local Dairy Queen.

Lenny went and sat back down in his old recliner. Larry settled in and put his feet up on a table. From the looks of the table, his weren't the first feet to rest there; Lenny's apartment was pretty dump.

"We've been going together for a few Year's," Lenny said, apropos of nothing. "She would like me to stop performing so I can get a real job and marry her."

Lenny took swig of his drink; Larry, not entirely certain what was in his glass, sniffed it and regarded it suspiciously. Lenny noticed.

"Oh, here, let me put some water in that for you."

Lenny did that and returned.

"You don't want to get married?"

"Well, I'm not completely averse to that. But now's not the time."

"How do you know?"

"I know. One, I'm not ready for a real job yet. Two, look at this place. I can hardly live with myself, much less anyone else." Lenny made a motion with his head inviting Larry to look at his bachelor pad.

Lenny had a point; his apartment was small and messy and Larry was surprised to hear that Lenny had a girlfriend because the place showed no signs of having had any female influence ever. From the clothes on the floor to the Early Bachelor furniture that had not been bought new, at least by Lenny, the only place that looked like it had had any sort of thought given to it was a bookcase, which, though too small to handle Lenny's fair-sized personal library, at least showed some signs of organization. Lenny also had a habit of eating fast food, judging by the collection of bags located throughout the apartment.

"She suggests I take the insurance exam and sell insurance. I don't want to sell insurance. So I'm resisting. Something says it wouldn't be right. You gotta trust your instincts sometimes."

Larry nodded. He'd followed an instinct or two in his time as well. It was the main reason he was sitting in Lenny's living room right now.

"I thought about it long and hard though. She made a compelling case. But I'm a performer; I may not be a particularly good performer, but performers perform and, until nobody books me anymore I'll probably keep at it."

Larry felt for his new friend. It appeared he liked his girlfriend; but it was plain he wanted to be on stage. On the other hand, Larry came from a long line of people who did seemingly boring things like sell insurance and teach and seemed to pass worthwhile lives.

"Lenny, people need insurance."

Lenny sat up, leaned forward, rested his elbows on his knees and cradled his drink in his hand. He nodded significantly. "I know, my friend. I know. I need it, you need it; we all need it. God bless Lloyd's of London and Allstate. But they shouldn't have to buy it from me."

Open Mic Night

Dive Comedy Club

Somewhere in the Midwest

Lenny and Larry, appearing as Lenny and Larry because Lenny still thought the name Regular Guys was 'gay', took the stage for the first time at an open mic night in a large town a few hours' drive away. They went that far because Lenny fully expected to bomb and he had no desire to do so in the town he lived in, especially if he would need to sell insurance to some of them at a later date.

And, at Lenny's insistence, they had a few minutes of material pre-prepared. Officially, Lenny was still open to the idea of winging it, but he wanted to be prepared just in case. Though they had reviewed the material, Larry had a copy of the material folded in a pocket; he didn't expect to need it, but he thought the script might make a nice prop.

The two waited off to the side of the stage while a young man finished a set that was more angry than funny. The emcee came out and began introducing Lenny and Larry.

"OK fans, we got some really funny comedians still to come your way tonight, but before we get to them, let's bring out our next act..."

That got some good laughs; Larry liked that; it was a good line and he thought that meant the crowd was in the mood to laugh. Lenny didn't like the fact the emcee was funnier than he and Larry would probably going to be. He hoped the valet hadn't parked the car yet because he was sure he would need it in short order.

"This had better frigging work, dingwad," Lenny said. "I do NOT want to sell insurance."

Larry looked at Lenny and smiled. Lenny noticed Larry had a certain gleam in his eye.

"...seriously, I'm kidding folks. They're really funny guys, ladies and gentlemen, give it up for Lenny and Larry!"

There was no backstage for amateur night. Comedians waited on the side of the stage next to the audience. Larry took the stairs leading to the stage and jumped on stage as if he were doing Swan Lake; Lenny followed, taking pictures of the crowd with his phone.

Larry, who turned out to be a ham once you put a spotlight on him, was bowing when Lenny came and nudged him out of the way so he could bow and take more pictures, causing Larry to trip and almost fall off the stage, thereby accounting for The Regular Guys' first laugh.

It went pretty well from there, though since it was Open Mike Night and expectations were rock bottom to begin with so anything above getting pelted with beer would've been considered a success.

(Two)

Lenny and Larry did amateur nights around their area for a while. Though any entertainment act takes time to hone, both were pleased from the start. They were both funny, smart men who took an interest in the world around them and were usually able to say funny things about current events or even banal things like Larry's trying to buy a new cell phone or Lenny's losing a dinner plate and finding it a month later in the micro-wave.

The only problem was Lenny had – infrequently - tried to reach for the gutter when they weren't getting immediate laughs. Larry had no desire to reach into the gutter and, typically, counseled patience.

"Lenny, we have to stop going in the toilet. We don't need to do that."

"Yeah, I know, but if we go more than 30 seconds without laugh, subconsciously people start thinking we're not funny."

"Maybe, but we're nice guys; people intuitively like us. Or they intuitively like me at least. I think the jury is still out on you; but they appear willing to give you the benefit of the doubt."

Privately Lenny disagreed with his new partner. People, after all, laughed at the lowest common denominator, especially in a society like 21st century America where television was now the centerpiece of most homes. Laughs were good for a comedian. Comedians who got laughs worked a lot. Lenny liked working.

But Larry had a point. While they were funny most of the time, their act was still under construction. They were still feeling each other out, getting to know

each other personally as well as professionally, and every now and then there were times when they ended up staring at each other blankly for a couple of seconds.

Larry, typically, would try to put that awkward silence to work for them. He would pull out the script he had kept with him since their first performance together.

"Hold on," Larry would say, pulling out the script when neither could think of anything to say. "We've got material prepared."

"Seriously, folks, we do," Lenny would say, showing a palm assuredly. "We've got comedy coming up. We are trained professionals with a proven comedy delivery system."

Larry would pretend to be furtively looking for a joke.

"Really, there's one here somewhere," he would say.

"Again, we're trained, professional comedians, ladies and gentlemen. Please don't try this at home."

Depending on the audience, there would be either a lot of laughter or a heckler yelling at them. Both Lenny and Larry enjoyed sparring with hecklers and a few minutes of their undivided attention usually got the show back on track and had the added bonus of shutting the heckler up.

Sometimes the audience seemed to enjoy the search for material. In this case Larry would pretend to find something after ruffling through a few pages.

"Eureka! I have found a joke, my friend."

"Most excellent. Is it funny?"

Larry would then pretend to review the joke.

"Not really," he would say, shaking his head sadly. Or he might nod enthusiastically. Invariably he would begin a lame knock-knock joke or have two rabbis and a water salesman walking into a bar. Neither could finish a joke like that but, by then, their minds were humming again and they could wing their way out of it.

U.S. Highway 86

Outside A Medium Sized Town

Somewhere in the Midwest

After a while Lenny and Larry decided it was time to persuade people to pay them for their act. Lenny made some phone calls and got them a gig at the Ramada Inn again. They were booked in for two weeknights.

"I really would've preferred a weekend gig," Lenny said. "Who's gonna be there on a weeknight?"

"It doesn't matter," Larry said. "It's our first paying gig. Besides, there's no place to go but up."

"Do you look on the bright side of everything?" Lenny said. "I'd like to have been with you on the Titanic. 'Oooh, I've always wondered what it would be like to ride in a lifeboat! And they're going to make a big movie about this, so we'll all be famous!'"

Lenny had changed his voice to a falsetto while mocking his partner; Larry found himself laughing.

"I had 13 years of Lutheran schooling," Larry said. "We know no other way. If something goes wrong, just turn it over and look at the bright side. If your Sunday picnic gets rained out, well, there are always ants and no one wants to play softball anyway cause someone is always pulling a muscle running to first; better to stay inside and play Scrabble, but even Scrabble has its dangers if you don't have a good dictionary. So we'll take the circumstances that present themselves and make them work for us. We got two weeknights? OK, we'll take two weeknights and see what happens."

"I hate you. I want to complain and you hit me with logic."

Larry laughed.

"It's hard to get over that kind of upbringing."

The pair drove in silence for a while. Lenny liked the exchange because Larry seldom talked about himself. He prodded him some more.

"Thirteen years of Lutheran schooling is a lot. What did it lead to?"

"I was a radio announcer for a few Year's, actually. It's what I wanted to do as a kid."

"Really? Where?"

Larry named the town. It was a fair size town in the Midwest.

"The last couple of years I was the announcer for their minor league baseball team."

"That sounds interesting."

"It was, really. I liked it, I had wanted to do it as a kid but then the team got sold and the new owners brought in their own announcer. I got laid off."

"Couldn't you have gone back to a station?"

"Yeah, but you know what? I woke up the next morning and didn't miss it."

"Really? You didn't miss something you wanted to do your whole life? That's interesting."

"I found it interesting, too," Larry said.

"So you never wanted to be a comedian?"

Larry shook his head.

"Not really. I did it first at an amateur night to impress a girl."

"Did it work?"

"No. She would've been more impressed had I bussed her table efficiently."

"What did you do then?"

"I worked as a newspaper reporter for a while. I didn't take to that, though."

"Why not?"

"I had to spend too much time on the phone. I don't like to bother people. I figured if someone had something important to tell me they'd call me."

Lenny laughed.

"Doesn't work that way?"

Larry laughed.

"Not really. Consequently, I wasn't a very good reporter."

"So you naturally fell into comedy. It would follow. Do you really think two losers who can't make it on their own can make this work?"

"Who knows? You never really know anything until you dive in and do it. I just want to see what happens. At the very least we'll see Ann again."

Lenny looked sharply at Larry.

"Ann? How do you know?"

"I called her and warned her. She probably has the speed trap set up waiting for us right now."

Instinctively Lenny looked at the speedometer and took his foot off the gas even though he was within a few miles per hour of the established maximum speed for that stretch of U.S. Highway 86.

"Great, just what I need. The fuzz there."

"Lenny, I think she likes you. She asked about you."

"Of course she did. I'm a habitual criminal and she has a quota to meet."

"No really. She seemed interested in you."

"Well, I am free again," Lenny said, sighing. Lenny and his now ex-girlfriend had broken up when Lenny had decided to team up with Larry.

The two drove in silence for a while.

"So," Lenny said after a while. "You weren't good enough to make the big leagues in radio, and you couldn't hack it as reporter. Is there is any reason I shouldn't turn this car around right now and call all this off?"

"Yeah, I'm your only option; it's either this or sell insurance."

Lenny again violated the terms of the Second Commandment, but he was smiling as he did it.

*Ramada Inn Lounge
A Medium Sized Town
Somewhere in the Midwest*

Lenny and Larry first professional appearance went fairly well. They delivered 20 minutes of mostly funny comedy, and, for their first time out of the chute both were rather pleased. Lenny and Larry were by far the funniest of the four acts, which is really damning with faint praise because the other three acts were not very good.

"Larry, except for us, this show blew," Lenny said as they sat sharing a drink at the bar afterwards.

"I know partner, but look at the big picture. It was a live audience, mostly, and a chance to work. It was low pressure. And it was a check, our first professional appearance."

The two tapped their glasses together to commemorate their first professional appearance together.

"Hey you two reprobates," a female voice behind them said. "Can I see your driver's license, registration and proof of insurance, please?"

Both Lenny and Larry turned their heads. It was Officer Ann Shelton.

"Oh great, the fuzz," Larry said unenthusiastically while holding out his arms to hug her. Lenny did the same. Ann, in deference to the warmer weather, was wearing a denim mini skirt and a pink sleeveless blouse and her blonde hair was a little shorter. Lenny was staring at her again.

"At least you had the good sense to take my advice about working together. You guys were really funny."

"Really?" Lenny asked, as if he were genuinely surprised to hear he and Larry were funny.

"Yeah, really. I enjoyed it. All you need now is a name."

"We don't need a name," Lenny said. "'Lenny and Larry' is fine."

"She has a point, Lenny. Again."

Lenny waved his hand dismissively. After an hour or so of revelry, Larry, who can't take much more than an hour of revelry, pleaded exhaustion and retired, leaving Lenny to fend for himself with Ann.

(Two)

Late the next morning Larry was banging on Lenny's hotel room door demanding entrance. He had woken up and gone for a run, showered, and was now hungry. He figured Lenny would be up – it was almost noon after all – and they could share a meal together.

To Larry's great surprise, Ann opened the door to Lenny's room. She was wearing a robe and her blonde hair was tussled to an extent that suggested a fair amount of her time recently might well have been spent on her back. Ann reached out, grabbed Larry's arm and yanked him in the room

"Get in here! I can't have people seeing me like this," Larry glanced behind to see the crowd of people shocked at seeing Ann in a robe and not properly made up but the door was slammed shut too fast for him to see anything.

"You will be pleased to know I got him to agree to the name Regular Guys."

"Really? How?"

Ann nodded demurely and actually blushed.

Larry laughed and spread his arms out expansively.

"Hey, whatever it takes, baby. Sometimes you gotta take one for the team."

Ann laughed.

"Oh, I took one for the team," she said. "More than one, actually."

At that moment the door opened and Lenny breezed in. He had gone out and brought back coffee and some bagels.

"Partner," Lenny said as he spread breakfast out on the table. "We are now The Regular Guys. I've alerted the media."

"That's what Ann reported. She said it took a lot of persuading."

"Larry!" Ann said, shocked at this etiquette breach.

"She, uh, made me see the light, yes. You were both right. I was wrong. The Regular Guys will take the stage for the first time tonight!"