Preface to "White Castle"

Submitted for fulfillment of Honors thesis requirements

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There's a story behind this play, and that story goes back about three months and 3,000 miles.

At the time, I happened to be in London through Ball State's London Centre program. While sitting in my room one day, I started pondering my near future. Here I was, a senior scheduled to graduate the following May. That was scary enough. But on top of that, I was a student in the Honors College which meant I had to complete an Honors thesis in order to graduate with honors.

Time was running out. I had to decide on something and do it.

Well, as part of the London Centre experience, we saw a lot of theatre while in London. I mean a lot. We went to at least two shows every week; sometimes three. Even though I am a journalism major, I've always loved the theatre and held it close to my heart. Theatre-going in London was a fantastic experience; one I'll never forget.

Ah, but I ramble. To the point: On this fateful day, a decision came over me -- for my Honors thesis, I would write a play. It was perfect. Since subjects for Honors theses can be very broad and don't have to be research-based, I wished to do something creative, and writing a play was the perfect blend of my two loves -- writing and theatre.

The Ball State faculty member who happened to be there that quarter was Dr. Gilbert Bloom, a professor from the department of theatre. I had gotten to know Dr. Bloom fairly well through a Modern Drama class I was taking from
him and from just spending so much time at group outings, etc. I approached him about the idea and I also told him that my main goal would be to submit it in the Original One Acts competition the theatre department has every spring and to get the play produced. My thinking was that anyone could sit down and write a play, but having it produced would make it complete. Dr. Bloom informed me that the deadline was somewhere in March, so I would have to hustle when I got back to school. I also asked him if he would be my faculty advisor when we got back. He said he would, but that I should talk to Dr. Strother first, since he had more experience with playwriting. So it was settled -- I would write a one-act play for my Honors thesis.

Upon returning to school, I went to see Dr. Strother as soon as I could, which was the first Friday back, March 9. I told him my story, and he said that would be fine as long as I included about a five-page preface explaining my experiences and problems concerning the play and the writing of it (which is what you're reading right now.) But to complicate things, the deadline was only two weeks away -- March 23. My task was not going to be an easy one since I didn't even have an idea yet.

The following Monday, two of my friends and I decided on a whim to road trip to White Castle in Indianapolis at about 1 a.m. As most Ball State students know, this isn't totally unusual. Going to White Castle is sort of a cult thing related to just road trips in general. While sitting in the "fabulous aluminum room" at the White Castle on the
northside of Indianapolis, I looked around at how clean it was and how the other patrons were upper-class high school students and others dressed fairly well. In my existence, I hail from the southside of the city -- a lower-middle class, kind of red-neck part of town. And in the center of the southside was a White Castle that I had grown up with where the place was hardly spotless, and the patrons were bums, drunks, ruffians and others of that ilk. When I was in high school, and even when I was home from college, my friends and I would often go to this White Castle in the wee hours of the morning. We went there to eat, but more than that, we went there to watch the people.

And so, while sitting in this upper-class White Castle and thinking about the White Castle I knew, the idea struck me -- the subject of my play would be White Castle and the strange people that frequent it at 2 a.m.

So I had my idea and setting, but no plot. For the next week, I wrestled with plotlines in my head. I wanted to portray these people I knew so well -- these people from the southside. For after all, they're just ordinary people eeking out a living the best they can. Which presented another problem -- I was writing a one-act play, which meant I couldn't have an excessive amount of character. I could have easily used 15 characters just drawing from my personal experience of early-morning White Castle patrons. So I figured I would use the ones I knew best -- two high school students, two female employees, and one bum who would
be sort of a composite character of all the bums, drunks and others I had seen in White Castle. I also decided he would be the funniest character of the cast, since just his appearance and actions would be mildly amusing. So, I employed a technique I had used before. (When I was a senior in high school, a friend and I wrote and directed a one-act musical comedy for a student show called Redskin Revue.) In that play, I created a character who drifted about the set, listening to what was going on and occasionally throwing in a smart-aleck remark or humorous line. My bum character seemed to fit this perfectly, since bums have a way of drifting about places, and you never know what they're going to say next. So I had my first solid character. His name was easy -- Norm, since he would be furthest from the norm of any other character in the play.

But the rest of my characters were going to be just ordinary people. Keeping this in mind, I thought of a generalization -- taking common, everyday people and thrusting them into a bizarre, unusual situation. Besides being interesting, it could also be funny, and I wanted to write a funny play since humor writing has always been my forte. And one of my life's philosophies has been that the best thing anyone can do for a person is make them laugh.

I had the basics worked out -- I would take these White Castle people and put them in a set of unusual circumstances. My main characters were also set: Two female employees, one 18ish and the other 40ish, since that's the kind of people who worked at White Castle at 2 a.m. Carol, the 18-year-old,
was very loosely based on a girl I knew from my place of summer employment for the past three years. Not excessively beautiful or ugly, she was to be just plain but very likeable. The other woman, Jan, was based on no one. She was just a composite of older women employed in fast food restaurants.

The two high school students were easy -- they were based on my friends at home whom I used to go to White Castle with. Sam was my best friend in high school, but the character bearing that name, though physically looking like him, actually spoke lines that I would say. His sidekick, Dan, was kind of a composite of myself and other friends from high school. In high school, Sam and I went almost everywhere together, and we were known as a pair -- Sam and Dave. In the play, the idea is the same, but the characters are a little different. Since I had so many characters, I had to be careful not to make each one really important, or else the audience would lose focus on the play from just trying to dope out the characters. So I endowed Sam with both my lines and typical Sam lines and made him more prominent while Dan was relegated to a lower, sidekick/tag-along character. Thus, Sam was given almost all of the funny lines of the two, and on occasion, Dan would play his straight man.

With characters in hand, I needed to work out the specifics of the plot. I needed an unusual situation. My first thought was a murder, because I wanted to make it fairly believeable and not totally absurd like alien invasions or something really far out. So I decided to stay with the murder, but
that meant I had to come up with a reason for the murder. I didn't want it to be a senseless murder -- it had to have a motive. My first thought was something to do with Russians and the KGB. So I toyed with that concept and, ironically, that very night I got a call from the same friend with whom I'd written the play in high school. I told her my basic plot and that I was considering the Russian/KGB idea. She pointed out that this was too cliche, and I was forced to agree. She said I needed something more modern, and she suggested an illegal alien. So we discussed the idea, and figured we would mix the illegal alien up with drugs since there are a lot of drug-related murders nowadays.

At this point, I had already written the opening dialogue, originally planning the first character to walk in to be a gas station attendant in greasy overalls just so the audience could get a feel of the atmosphere of the place. So in order to work the illegal alien into the script without adding another character, I made the gas station attendant the illegal alien.

At this point, I made another decision -- my play was going to have a happy ending. I told myself that I was cynical enough as it was, and I didn't like being cynical. So -- happy ending at all costs.

Looking over my opening dialogue, I noticed Carol seemed hopeless. On the whole, the other characters were happy with their lifestyles, except for Carol. So I decided to have her be the winner in the end, to have her figure out the murder.
Her reward, I decided, should be something more than just money since the character she exhibited showed she wasn't concerned with money and materialism. Her reward was college, because in real life on the southside of Indianapolis there are kids like Carol that have parents who can't afford to send them to college.

Next came the actual writing of the dialogue. This all went smoothly, since the dialogue seemed to come naturally from the character. Norm's snarky-aleck comments flowed easily from my sarcastic mind as did Sam and Dan's dialogue.

Finally I came to the end where Carol was supposed to figure everything out. Suddenly, I was stuck. I had to have her do it out without long, drawn out explanations and complicated, lengthy evidence. After all, it was only a one act play, not an Agatha Christie three-act mystery.

So I went back to the beginning and had Gomez drop the main piece of evidence. I then put the remaining evidence in the form of records of illegal drug dealings, which is probably the weakest concept in the whole play. In order to make it a little more believable, I gave Sam the line "Only those two guys would be dumb enough to keep records of illegal drug deals." Still very weak, I didn't have time to sit down and think up something better.

Due to lack of background in the solving of murders, the ending to the play ended up being the weakest part. But looking over the whole thing, I realized that everything was just a tad on the hokey side, and I figured the ending still fit in.
But my task wasn't complete. My ending wasn't worked out, but I had to go back through the whole play adding lines and changing things so that the ending would fit as best as I could make it fit. From this came Sam and Dan's vague explanation of what they knew about Gomez and Carol's line about the two guys from the gas station trying to sell her some pills.

The added character of the policeman was a necessity. If there's a murder and a dead body, the police have to be called. And I couldn't have the call placed and then no resulting action since this would be a loose end never tied up. So the policeman is there out of necessity, and to inform Carol of the reward (again, the reward bit is a little hokey, but necessary). Thus came to end the saga of White Castle.

I finished writing the play Wednesday night, March 21, two days before the deadline. The next night was spent typing the script and adding character descriptions and stage directions (what little there is of them). I turned it in Friday, and the great wait began.

A couple of weeks later (I don't recall the exact date) Dr. English phoned and informed me the play had tied for second place. I was elated. I had had serious doubts about my chances considering the weak ending. But the humor and the dialogue pulled it through.

And as I watched the final performance of the play on May 11, I realized that this was a complete Honors thesis.
The performance was excellent and funny. It was a great thrill to see my words and characters come to life.

And I'll never see White Castle again without imagining a dead illegal alien lying on the floor....
WHITE CASTLE
A play in one act

by David Walter
(The scene is the interior of a White Castle restaurant. There is an entrance at stage right and stage left. A counter top stretches across center stage, with tables and chairs stage left of the counter. The restaurant is located on the Southside of Indianapolis in a relatively seedy part of town. It's late at night, approximately 2 a.m. Two women are working. One, a young woman of 18, is sweeping the floor in front of the counter. She is neither excessively pretty nor ugly -- just average. The other woman is approximately 45 years old and is cleaning behind the counter. The young woman's name is Carol; the older woman is named Jan. A bum wearing a long, dirty trenchcoat and crumbled Bogie-type hat sits at the corner table, drinking a cup of coffee. He is a regular of the restaurant and his name is Norm.

Carol: ...I don't know, Jan. I mean, there's gotta be more to life than just workin' everyday, goin' home, eatin' watchin' TV, goin' to bed and gettin' up and gonna to work again. I'm only 18 -- I'm not ready for that kind of life. It's so boring. Nothing ever happens around here. I'm just trapped here, on the Southside of Indianapolis, working at White Castle. Boooooring!!

Jan: You got good grades in high school, Carol. Why don't you go to college?

Carol: My mom and dad can't afford to send me to college, and the little money I make here goes to help them. I wish I could go.

Jan: Ah kid, don't get so depressed. It ain't that bad livin' and workin' here. Even though places like
New York, Los Angeles and San Francisco sound exciting, they ain't home. The Southside -- as boring as it seems -- is your home. It's unique and special in its own strange way.

Norm: (Interrupting) The Southside of Indianapolis -- God's Country!!

Jan: Shut up, Norm. (She wads up a sack and throws it at him.)

...As I was saying. You're still young, Carol. Your whole life's still ahead of you. So you're working at White Castle -- big deal! I'm 45 years old and I'm workin' here. Just remember -- It could be worse. You could be dead.

Carol: Gee, what a cheery thought.

Norm: (Interrupting again) It could be worse. You could be in Detroit!

Jan & Carol: SHUT UP, NORM!! (Both wad up sacks and throw them at him.

(Carol finishès her sweeping and goes back behind the counter. From the entrance stage left, a man enters. He is 25-30 years old. He's wearing greasy coveralls, has dirt on his face and a stocking cap over his greasy hair -- obviously a mechanic or gas station attendant. He throws the butt of a cigarette to the floor and stamps it out with his foot while scanning the unseen menu above the counter. He approaches the counter and speaks, with a Spanish accent.

Man: Could I have six White Castles, some onion chips and
a chocolate shake please?

Jan: What size shake?
Man: Large.
Jan: For here or to go?
Man: Uh, (glancing over his shoulder) make it to go.
Jan: (ringing up the price on the cash register) That'll be $2.93.

(Man reaches deep into his pocket and pulls out a small wad of dirty, crumpled bills. He sorts out three ones while a small slip of paper falls to the floor, unnoticed by anyone. He hands the bills to Jan; she makes the appropriate change. The man takes a seat by the stage-left entrance.)

Norm: (Approaching the man) Excuse me sir. Do you think life has any purpose?
Man: Go away.
Norm: How do you feel about U.S. intervention in Central America?
Man: Get lost.
Norm: Uh, how 'bout them Cubs?
Man: NOW!
Norm: Okay, okay. Just tryin' to make some pleasant dinner conversation, that's all. Sheesh! (Returns to his seat.)

(Through the stage right entrance, two young men the same age as Carol enter. Sam is tall and good-looking. The other one, Dan, is short and maybe a little plump.)

Sam: Okay, man, this is it. We're goin' for the record
tonight. I think I can handle at least 10. Think you can handle 10 belly-bombers, big Dan?

Dan: I'm pretty damn hungry, but after seeing "Dawn of the Dead," I don't know if I could handle 10.

Sam: C'mon, Dan! This is it. The ultimate dining experience, here at the fabulous aluminum room in White-ee Cast-tel-ee, located in God's Country.

Norm: See? I told ya!

Sam: You can just feel those exquisite morsels of meat, bun, onion, and that famous White Castle mustard, sliding down your throat, one after the other. And before you know it -- 10 of those babies, eating away at your stomach lining. This is it, Dan! The big payoff! It'll be an eating extravaganza, just like the time we polished off a Maximus pizza from Noble Roman's. We'll make culinary history!

Dan: Okay, okay, enough peer pressure -- I'll do it.

Sam: (Slapping him on the back) You're a brave man, Dan, and we're all proud of you. Good luck.

Carol: (Calling out) Six, onion chips, and a chocolate shake. Man hurriedly gets up, grabs his food and leaves, not saying a word as Carol says, "Thanks. Come again."

Carol: Gee, he sure was in a hurry.

Dan: Well Carol, it's just that he can't wait to get home and dig into those belly-bombers.

Sam: Hey, wasn't that Gomez or whatever his name is who just started working at that all-night gas station across
from Target?

Dan: Yeah, I think it was.

Carol: Oooh! I hate that gas station. The two guys who run the place give me the creeps. They came in here last night and tried to sell me some pills. And I've seen them hit up on other high school kids in the parking lot.

Dan: Well, you know what they say, Carol: Drugs are for people who can't handle reality.

Sam: No Dan, it's the other way around: Reality is for people who can't handle drugs.

Dan: Some guys were telling me that they're not even paying Gomez minimum wage because he just moved here from Mexico or someplace like that.

Sam: Yes, sports fans, they come from miles around just to dine at White Castle.

Dan: Hey, it could be one of those commercials you hear on the radio, you know about the couple that gets married and then goes to White Castle before the reception.

Sam: I can see it now: "Gomez Gonzalez gave up his high-paying job as a taco salesman and came 3,000 miles to work at a sleazy, all-night gas station just to be near the delicious taste of White Castle." Whatta ya think, Dan?

Dan: I don't know. It's got a good beat and I can dance to it. I give it a 75.
Carol: You guys are weird.

Sam: No, Carol, we're just media children, born and bred on television, radio, and midnight movies.

Dan: The staples of life.

Carol: Did you guys go to the midnight movie tonight? How was it?

Dan: It was pretty sick. In this one part, one of the zombies rips off this guy's arm and blood squirts everywhere. Then he starts eating the arm like a Colonel Sanders' chicken leg.

Norm: (Interjecting) Was it original recipe or extra crispy?

Sam: Original, Norm.

Carol: Yuck. I don't see how you guys can stand those gross movies.

Sam: No, the sickest part is when this zombie is playing with this guy's guts like a Slinky, and the muscles are still movin'...

Carol: Thanks, Sam, I think I get the idea.

Dan: (To Sam) I don't know, that part where that guy's head gets blown off with a shotgun is pretty gross.

Sam: Yeah, but not as gross as those guts squirming' around...

Carol: (becoming a bit squiemish during this exchange) Okay, okay!! That's enough guys. You wanna make me throw up?

Sam: No, we'll probably do that after we get done eating here. So if you threw up, and then we threw up, I
think it would be a little overkill.

Jan: Are you guys gonna order or loiter?

Sam: Ah, Jan my love! I didn't know you were working this fine night. (He runs behind the counter and grabs Jan from behind) Run away with me Jan! Let me take you away from all this! We'll go to all the glamorous places of the world! Paris! Rome! Muncie!

Norm: God's Country!!

Sam: Exactly. Come on Jan, whatta ya say? When can we elope?

Jan: (Playing along with his game) I don't know Sam. I have to work every night this week, but I get Friday off. How 'bout then?

Sam: It's a date. (He pecks her on the cheek and returns to the other side of the counter.)

Jan: Seriously, what do you guys want to eat?

Dan: How's the fish?

Norm: Dangerous.

Dan: Same as usual. Even though it'll probably be the death of me, I'll have 10 hamburgers and a large Coke.

Sam: I'll have the same thing.

Jan: (Ringing up the order) That'll be $3.33 a piece.

(Gomez re-enters from stage left. He holds his stomach, and walks with just a bit of a stagger. He's carrying his bag of food. He plops it on the counter.)
Gomez: Uh, I need some mustard. (He goes into the bathroom, located behind the counter on the stage left side.)

Dan: Hey, it's Gomez again. He looked like he was drunk.

Carol: I don't see how these people can do it. It's bad enough to eat these things sober, but then they go out and get drunk and eat 'em. And on top of that, he wants this horrible mustard (She puts the packets in the sack). There's no way. I think I'd rather be... (Gomez staggers out of the bathroom, looks at Carol and falls flat on the floor, face down.) ...dead.

Sam: Gee, he must have had the fish.

Dan: Ah, he probably just passed out from too much booze.

Jan: Well, get him out of the middle of the floor. I can't have people sleeping on the floor -- whatta ya think this is, a dormitory?

Sam: Nah, I think we should leave him there. Just think how embarrassed he'll be when he wakes up.

Jan: No way, Sam. Get him up and get him out of here. If he stays there, he'll ruin business.

Sam: Come on, Jan -- who comes to White Castle at two o'clock in the morning?

Jan: You guys are here.

Sam: Good point. Come on, Dan, let's wake him up. (He leans over and shouts at Gomez) HEY GOMEZ! Rise and shine, buddy -- time to go to church!'

Dan: I don't think he can hear you, Sam.

Sam: Well, we'll just have to resort to a more physical
approach. (He bends over and shakes Gomez.) Let's go, Gomez -- your hamburgers are getting cold. (shakes him harder) Come on. (shakes him again) He sure is stubborn.

Norm: (Rising from his corner seat) Wait a minute. (He goes over to Gomez, checks his pulse on his neck, then picks up his wrist and checks the pulse there. He drops the wrist.) This man's metabolic processes are now history.

Carol: You mean he's...

Norm: He's kicked the bucket, bought the farm, shuffled off this mortal coil and gone to meet his maker. In other words, he's dead.

Dan: Dead?

Jan: (gasping) Dead!?

Carol: (taken aback, hands to her mouth) Dead??

SCENE CHANGE
Sam: What a bummer.

Dan: Oh my God! What should we do--call an ambulance?

Sam: He's already dead. What good is an ambulance gonna do?

Carol: We should call the police.

Norm: (shouting) THE POLICE!!

Sam: On the phone, Norm.

Carol: I'll call (goes to cash register, takes out two dimes, goes to pay phone in corner).

Jan: Why did he have to die here? Why couldn't he die at Waffle House, or the Big Wheel? Or even at the Burger King drive-thru? No, he couldn't do that. He had to die at this White Castle. My boss is going to kill me for this.

Carol: Uh, guys? What's the phone number for the police?

Sam: Gee, I don't know. I've never called the police before. Don't you just dial the operator?

Dan: No, there's some special number you call in case of emergencies, I think it's 911. Look in the phone book.

Sam: Look in the yellow pages under 'stiffs.'

Carol: Cut it out, Sam, this is serious.

Sam: Deadly serious, ar, ar, ar.

(Carol rolls her eyes and goes back to the phone. She is joined at the phone by Dan, Sam and Jan. They crowd around the phone.)

Carol: (trying to get some elbow room) Uh, shouldn't somebody be watching the body?

Sam: Why? Is it going to do tricks?

(Dan flips through phone book)
Dan: Here it is: 911.

(Carol deposits the money and dials. All wait tensely around the phone.)

Carol: Come on, answer (all wait).

Sam: How many ringy-dingies?

Carol: About five.

Sam: Jeez! They must all be at Waffle House.

(They continue to wait. Norm has returned to his seat, he pushes his hat back on his head, looks at the body and shakes his head.)

Norm: What a way to go. It's bad enough coming to this place when you're alive. But when you're dead? --sheesh!

(Finally the phone is answered)

Carol: Hello!? Yes, we have a dead man lying on our floor. Can you send a policeman over right away? "hat? I don't know why he died, he just died. What is this, 20 questions? (pause) Address? I don't know, it's the White Castle on South Madison Avenue. (pause) Okay, thanks. (hangs up) They're sending a policeman right over.

Jan: Great. What are we supposed to do 'til then?

Sam: There's four of us. We could play some euchre?

Carol: No, something's not right here. People don't just walk into White Castle, go to the bathroom and die. How did he die?

Sam: Probably indigestion.

Carol: We should examine the body.

Jan: I don't think so, Carol. We should wait until the police get here.
Carol: Don't be a chicken, Jan. This is the first interesting thing that's happened around here. Sam, Dan, help me turn him over.

(Sam, Dan and Carol turn the body over. On the floor where the man's stomach had been resting there is a small puddle of blood and paper towels. There's also a circular blood stain on the man's clothes over his stomach.)

Dan: Look! He's been shot!

Carol: (looking closer) No, not shot, stabbed.

Dan: Stabbed? Who would want to stab a gas station attendant?

Sam: Maybe he got robbed at the gas station.

Carol: No, he had just got off work when he came in here. And he went out that door (points stage right). when he left, which is away from the gas station.

(Norm begins pacing back and forth, hands behind his back, looking intent in thought.)

Norm: Okay, let's examine the facts:

Fact: This man is dead.
Fact: He was killed in some way.
Fact: It could have been suicide.
Fact: It could have been murder.
Fact: It could have been an accident.

(Sam starts to pace opposite Norm, mimicking him)

Sam: Fact: He came here to get something to eat.

Fact: He got something to eat.

Question: Did he eat it?

(Norm and Sam stop, look at each other and run for the bag on the counter. Sam cuts there first, and he rum-
(mages through the bag.)

Sam: All he ate was about half of the onion chips. And he drank some of the shake. And it looks like he didn't touch the hamburgers. I guess that rules out food poisoning.

Norm: "Wait! Before he died he went into the bathroom (Sam and Norm run into bathroom).

Dan: Do you think it could have been suicide, Carol?

Carol: No, I don't think so. If he was going to kill himself, why did he come back in here? I hate to sound like Quincy, but I think he was murdered.

Jan: Murder! That's all we need. Why don't you just wait until the police get here.

Dan: But who would want to kill a gas station attendant?

Carol: That's the magic question, Dan. And I'm going to find the answer.

(Re-enter Sam and Norm.)

Sam: There's nothing in there--but a bunch of paper towels smeared with blood.

Norm: Okay, let's approach this from a different point of logic: If I were this man, why would somebody kill me?

Sam: Good question, Norm.

Norm: Thanks.

Sam: You're welcome.

Norm: Anytime.

Sam: That's the answer?

Norm: Hell if I know--I just live here.

Sam: This is going to require some deep thought.

Norm: You're right. (look at each other, start pacing again).

Jan: I don't believe this. I've got Columbo Sr., Columbo Jr.
and an 18-year-old girl who thinks she's Quincy. And where in the world is the police?

Dan: If they're not here, they're probably at Waffle House.
Carol: There's got to be a reason why he was killed . . . but what could it be? (She starts to gaze mindlessly around the room, looking at the ceiling, floor, etc.) This is so stupid. The answer is probably right in front of (she spies piece of paper dropped by man earlier) my face. (She goes over and picks it up, quickly reads it to herself.) Guys, this is it! (Everyone stops for an instant, then they all cluster about Carol.) Read this note: "You know about us, but we know about you. So unless you keep quiet, you'll be out of a job and back in Mexico.''

Dan: So, what does it mean? Whose is it?
Carol: It smells like gasoline. It's got to belong to him.
Dan: It's not unusual for something to smell like gasoline. How do you know it's his?

Carol: Besides him, you and Sam are the only two people to come in here after I swept. And this floor was spotless after I swept. And since it doesn't belong to any of us, it must be his.

Sam: Okay, I'll buy that, but what does the message mean?
Carol: (thinking) Dan, give me his wallet.
Dan: What if he needs it?
Carol: I don't think he'll need it.

(Dan gets wallet from man's back pocket, hands it to Carol;)

Carol: Just as I thought—no IDs at all.
Jan: So?
Carol: The note says 'you'll be out of a job and back in Mexico.' I bet he's an illegal alien.

Sam: Which explains why he's not getting paid minimum wage. Since he's here illegally, there's no way he can demand to be paid a minimum wage.

Carol: (looking shocked) That's exactly right, Sam.

Sam: Yeah, sometimes I amaze even myself.

Carol: And the note must be from those two creepy guys who run that gas station.

Dan: But what about the 'you know about us' part of the note? What did he know that got him killed?

Norm: He probably knew there was no way he could eat his hamburgers, onion chips and a chocolate shake and live to tell about it.

Carol: Wait. Give me that bag (Dan gets bag from counter. Carol starts to rummage through it).

Sam: Oh, Carol! This is no time to be eating a dead man's food!

Carol: No, silly, look (she pulls hamburger buns out of one of the boxes, removes the top bun to reveal no meat, but a folded piece of paper). I knew there was some reason he came back in here after he was stabbed. (she unfolds the papers and quickly reads over them).

These are records of drug deals made by those two creeps.

Sam: Only those creeps would be dumb enough to keep records of illegal drug deals.

Carol: You said it, Sam. They were also dumb enough to try to sell stuff here.

(Enter a policeman)
Norm: (to policeman) Go away—we already got it all figured out.

Policeman: Sorry it took so long, but I was at Waffle House and this big fight broke out—(glances at floor). This must be the dead body.

Norm: No, that's the carpeting. Of course it's the body, you nitwit.

Carol: Here officer, look at these papers (gives papers to policeman).

Policeman: (examines papers) We got an anonymous tip about these two guys today. In fact, it must have been from him. I wonder why he didn't come straight to us instead of tipping us off anonymously.

Carol: He had to remain anonymous—he's an illegal alien.

Policeman: Yeah. He's also a dead illegal alien, which means he can't get the reward that's being offered for evidence leading to the arrest of these two guys.

Jan: But officer, Carol discovered all the evidence and figured the whole thing out. Don't you think she would be deserving of the reward?

Policeman: Is that true, Carol?

Carol: Well, I, uh, (before she can say anything, Sam and Dan immediately shout, "It's true, Carol did it all!!").

Policeman: "Well, it seems to be three against none. It looks like the reward's all yours, Carol, after we nail these two guys. What are you going to do with the money?

Carol: That's an easy one. I'm going to use it to go to
college.
(Sam, Dan and Jan break into applause)
Norm: You know, officer, if it wasn't for me, Carol would never have known the guy was dead. So maybe there's another reward . . . ?
Sam, Dan, Carol, Jan: (throwing anything available at Norm)

SHUT UP, NORM!

CURTAIN