

CATCH-UP TIME

by Robert Simms



GEORGE Businessman, older than Steve
STEVE Businessman
MIRANDA Businesswoman
ROBERTA Friend of Miranda
JOHN Regular customer
TERESA Regular customer
FAYE Waitress

The scene is a diner. The customers face the audience at a counter, which can be simulated using crates and boards. From STAGE LEFT to RIGHT the customers are GEORGE, STEVE, MIRANDA, ROBERTA, JOHN, and TERESA. They all have coffee. Faye is busy RIGHT, at any one of several waitress duties that can be mimed or sketchily blocked without distracting the audience.

As the dialogue unfolds, each customer manages to pronounce the words “catch up” in the midst of conversation. Every time the words are spoken, FAYE grabs a bottle of ketchup from a stock and brings it to the person who spoke. As the conversation continues, the bottles mount up.

GEORGE: *(Reading newspaper)* Says here that plant ain't gonna close after all.

STEVE: How's that?

GEORGE: It's gonna cancel a shift a week for two weeks every four months.

STEVE: That'll put 'em in the black.

GEORGE: Yeah, but it will put their employees in the red. How are they going to **catch up** on all that lost pay?

STEVE: Yeah, really. I got friends over there.

FAYE: Here ya go. *(Puts ketchup in front of GEORGE. He looks confused, because he hadn't asked for it. He places the ketchup to his left, out of his way.)*

MIRANDA: Hey, Steve, how do you like your new post?

STEVE: The pay is good, the job is good, the hours stink.

MIRANDA: A price for everything.

STEVE: In this case, my free time is taking the hit. I have to plan some serious

weekends to **catch up** on my long irons.

MIRANDA: Send your wife over when you go. We'll go shop with all that extra money you're making.

FAYE: Here's your ketchup. (*Puts ketchup in front of STEVE, who picks up the bottle, looks quizzically at GEORGE, then puts it down out of his way to his left, away from MIRANDA, who has not noticed the event. FAYE calls to kitchen*) Order up! (*She goes to take JOHN'S order.*)

ROBERTA: I'll go shopping with you anytime. As long as you buy!

MIRANDA: You poor dear. I told you when you opened that shop it was going to put you in rags.

ROBERTA: It's not funny.

MIRANDA: I'm sorry, Roberta—is it really that bad?

ROBERTA: Things are definitely slow, but I expect to **catch up** over Christmas.

MIRANDA: I can't support your shopping habit, but I can buy you lunch—want to go tomorrow? (*looks back at her coffee and doesn't see FAYE put ketchup in front of ROBERTA.*)

FAYE: One ketchup. (*Sets ketchup in front of ROBERTA, who doesn't want it and moves it to her right. FAYE calls to kitchen*) Order eggs over easy!

JOHN: And toast. (*He picks up a newsletter from a stack of mail and begins to read it.*)

FAYE: (*Pouring JOHN coffee*) Better move that mail before it gets wet. (*She walks off R. again*)

JOHN: (*To TERESA, reading from the newsletter. We see the front page, which has the large bold headline, "Catch-Up Sunday" on it.*) Says here the church is going to take an extra offering at the end of the month.

TERESA: What kind of offering?

JOHN: They call it **Catch Up** Sunday. When they try to make up for snow cancellations and tornados and stuff.

TERESA: Does that work?

FAYE: Here ya go. (*Gives JOHN a bottle of ketchup. He looks at her, shrugs, moves ketchup off to his right.*)

JOHN: Sure. Last year we got probably—I don't know, about one week's worth or more.

TERESA: I must have joined after that; I don't remember it. Why don't they just, I don't know, do less and go on?

JOHN: If you missed a paycheck, wouldn't you want to make it up?

TERESA: Well, yeah, I'd want to **catch up**. But is it the same thing with church? I mean, don't they have a lot of money stashed away?

FAYE: Here's your ketchup. (*Puts ketchup in front of TERESA. She looks at it, at FAYE, at it, and shakes her head in confusion.*)

JOHN: Churches have bills just like you. They budget just like you or your business. When they miss a Sunday, it affects everything from office supplies to missionaries.

TERESA: I didn't think of it that way.

JOHN: Most people don't.

MIRANDA: (*She has received her order and looks around vaguely but not very thoroughly before speaking.*) Hey, does anybody have any ketchup?

GEORGE, STEVE, ROBERTA, JOHN, and TERESA: (*as they pick up their ketchup bottles and hold them out toward Miranda*) Ketchup (*pronouncing the word more like "catch up."* *Miranda looks stunned, as she slowly turns her head and shifts her eyes left and right. All freeze a few seconds.*)

END