

Sample #1 Preview Pages of "Crisis on the Holiday Helpline"

(Begin Cut #07 on the Soundtrack CD: "Skit Open with Phone." The instrumental is of "Joy to the World.")

(Our main character, Brad, walks to a desk, pulls out the chair and sits down. The phone begins to ring, and he looks at his watch.)

Brad: Not time for my shift yet, whoever you are. Just call back when I'm on the clock.

(He flips through a magazine and takes a sip of a soft drink. The phone is still ringing. After a moment he looks at his watch again, counts the seconds, then nods his head.)

(The music playing should end right about now.)

Brad: Now, I'm on the clock. *(He puts a phone headset on and pushes the button on the phone.)* Hello, thank you for calling the Holiday Help Line, this is Brad.

Bill: *(Sniffing.)* Uh... huh? What did you say?

Brad: *(Impatiently.)* I said, this is the Holiday Help Line, I'm your counselor, Brad. How may I help you?

Bill: *(Distraught.)* You took so long to answer, I didn't think you were going to! I almost did myself in.

Brad: What do you mean?

Bill: I'm standing on a chair with a rope around my neck, and I'm using my cell phone to call the number I saw on TV. I was about to hang up and jump!

Brad: No, you weren't.

Bill: What?

Brad: What's your name, pal?

Bill: Bill.

Brad: *(Bored.)* Bill, you weren't going to jump, or you would have already. You're calling because you're reaching out for help.

Bill: *(Uncertain.)* Are you supposed to be telling me this? I thought you would try to talk me down first or something.

Brad: In fact, I doubt that you're even on a chair.

Bill: Yes, I am!

Brad: With a rope around your neck?

Bill: Well... um, not yet, but I was gonna put one on!

Brad: Are you even standing on the chair?

Bill: Uh... not really, I'm kinda sitting in it. But I was about to stand!

Brad: What kind of chair is it, Bill?

Bill: *(After a pause.)* It's a La-z-Boy.

Brad: That's what I figured. Look, Bill, let's cut to the chase. *(Each reason ticked off as if said a hundred times and he is just repeating them hollowly.)* You have everything to live for, tomorrow is another day, think of your loved ones, *(delivered like Yul Brynner)* et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. So let it

be written, so let it be done. Merry Christmas and Happy Hannakuh.

Bill: Wait, don't you care why I'm so depressed?

Brad: (*With obviously fake sympathy.*) Ok, why do you want to do yourself in, Bill? Tell me that. Inquiring minds want to know.

Bill: (*Missing the sarcasm.*) It's just awful! My stocks have hit rock bottom, I wrecked my Ferrari while I was on a skiing trip to Colorado, my girlfriend doesn't have time for me anymore because of her modeling career, and the neighborhood association is telling me the fireplace I had put in my condo doesn't conform to their rules, and I may have to take it out! Christmas shopping alone has run my credit card up to twenty thousand dollars, it'll take months to pay that off...

Brad: Just listen to yourself, Bill. Your problems are ones most ordinary people wish they had. Give me a break. Excuse me, I need to get a barf bag here, you're making me nauseous.

Bill: You know, you're not making me feel any better about myself at all! You're the worst help line counselor I've ever heard. And I've heard a plenty!

Brad: Oh, really? Call them a lot, do you, Bill?

Bill: Well... not a lot, really, just sometimes. Mostly around Christmas, I get pretty depressed around then. But you're the worst!

Brad: The worst. Well, Mr. Bill, did you ever stop to think that maaaaaybe, just maaaaaybe, you're not the only one that's had a lousy day? You think counselors have it easy, huh? Well, we have lives too! Crummy, stinking, messed-up lives just like everybody else. And then, to top it all off, we have to come in for eight crummy hours a day, listening to people like you, who are usually better off than us, whine and moan and complain about their "awful lives," and "terrible problems." Do you think that's fun, Bill?

Bill: Well, no, I didn't think...

Brad: (*Interrupting.*) That's your problem, you didn't think. But I think. Constantly. And I think you don't need a Holiday Helpline, Bill, you need a therapist to give you a quick ego fix.

Bill: My therapist was away on Christmas vacation.

Brad: I rest my case. Let me tell you about *my* day, Bill, don't you think that's fair?

Bill: Well, I suppose...

Brad: (*Bitterly.*) I live in an efficiency apartment right next to a solid waste treatment plant. That's why it was so cheap. So, to save a few bucks, every day I have to wake up to the smell of your sewage, Bill. That's not pleasant. Today, my cat was stuck in a tree that the city was trimming. He got put through the wood chipper. Bye, bye, kitty. Hello, compost! My car had a flat, and when I was changing the tire, it slipped off the jack and rolled into a police cruiser parked two blocks down. Then I was hitchhiking to work, when it started to rain and sleet. A truck splashed me with freezing mud and slush. Sounds like fun, huh, Bill? A great way to spend a Christmas Eve, right?

Bill: Not really...

Brad: (*Getting louder and more angry.*) Your model girlfriend doesn't have much time to spend with you. Awwww. Poor widdle rich boy. (*Visciously.*) At least you have one! Mine dumped me two days ago, and took all the furniture we had bought. She hocked the engagement ring I went into debt for, and spent the money on a Christmas present for her new boyfriend! (*Dripping with sarcasm.*) Isn't that wonderful? (*script continues...*)