

THE ENTERTAINMENT

Two short plays by Lem Doolittle,
adapted for simultaneous performance.

The Entertainment

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'The Entertainment' was first presented at the Buffalo Street Student Theatre on the evening of November 16th, 1973, with the following cast:

HARRY ESPERANZA Edgar Foy

LAWRENCE SLADE Allen Vogel

PEARL SLADE Sarah Wakefield

ROSA SLADE Sydney Mueller

EVELYN HICKMAN Paula Graves

BAR-FLY Uncredited

The production was directed by James B. Carrington. The setting was designed by Lula Chamberlain. The plays 'A Reckoning' and 'A Bar-fly' were written by Lem Doolittle, and later adapted by Joseph Wheattree for simultaneous performance as 'The Entertainment.'

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PRODUCTION NOTES

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

Lem Doolittle's original script for "A Reckoning" has almost no explicit stage directions. From the author's essays and letters, we know Doolittle thought of the writer as an equal partner with the actors. The actors should have equal authority to write-by-acting into what Doolittle called the "living script."

Given the lack of stage directions, and our own interest as a company in foregrounding the physicality of theatre we made the bold decision to borrow the stage directions from his rarely-performed pantomime "A Bar-fly" and fold them into the action of "A Reckoning." We've always thought of these two pieces as related, so it's been a very natural gesture to perform them simultaneously and on the same stage.

James B. Carrington

SET DESIGNER'S NOTES

Doolittle must have been an odd bird. Many playwrights – a Tennessee Williams or a Eugene O'Neill – spend as much energy on precise descriptions of the play's set as they do on any of the dialog. So my job is finding ways to be creative within constraint.

But Doolittle only described settings poetically. To be honest, I think he'd have preferred there wasn't a set at all! Well, here I am, building one anyway. Serves him right for disappearing all those years ago, the enigmatic wino.

I don't mind a drunk, but I hate riddles.

Lula Chamberlain

DRAMATURG'S NOTES

To set the play in present day, 1973, we needed to adjust the price of gas as discussed by Pearl, Evelyn, and Harry. We also made some adjustments to the description of Pearl's work.

We left in a line about Raines Law, which would have been archaic in Doolittle's time anyway.

I guess the biggest change we made, besides mashing the two Doolittle plays into one, was to the title. I thought we should rename it "A Reckoning and a Bar-fly" to mix the two titles and really be clear about where it came from. But Carrington liked the bleak irony of "The Entertainment."

Joseph Wheattree

WRITER'S NOTES

Many in the audience consider leaving.

If anyone leaves, let them leave.

The theatre is not a prison.

If anyone coughs, cough also.

The theatre is not a sickbed.

We minister to the audience.

We revere the pains of the audience.

Lem Doolittle

A RECKONING

SCENE I

(Late morning. A roadside tavern in central Kentucky. The tavern is called 'The Lower Depths.' Its clientele is working-class. It is open morning through late night. The walls are wood paneling. The floor is linoleum tile. 'The Lower Depths' is rarely busy. But it is never empty. Harry stands behind the bar. Evelyn sits on a stool at the bar.)

(Sound cue #1.)

HARRY: Too G.D. hot!

EVELYN: It's cool in here.

HARRY: Yep.

EVELYN: Like Babylon outside.

HARRY: G.D., you're right. Well, cool in here.

EVELYN: It's an oasis. I wonder how Ted's holding
up.

HARRY: A.C.! Down there, they all have it.

EVELYN: Sure, you're right. I've never been to
Texas.

HARRY: Oh, sure. They all have AC. Too cold almost.
In July, even.

EVELYN: He's got a hotel.

HARRY: Yeah, hotel life. That's living!

EVELYN: Maybe too much! I mean what's to stop him,
really ... Meet some tall thing at the hotel
bar ...

HARRY: Naw. Ted's a good man.

EVELYN: Naw, I know.

HARRY: He wouldn't ... run around.

EVELYN: You're right. How about a beer?

HARRY: No beer today. Hard Times whiskey.

EVELYN: That all you've got?

HARRY: It's a good whiskey. Local.

EVELYN: Yeah. You take deliveries from them?

HARRY: Sure.

EVELYN: You ever see ... one of them? The boys from
Hard Times?

HARRY: What?

EVELYN: I heard they're ... strange.

HARRY: They work hard. They make a good whiskey. Who are we to judge?

EVELYN: Sure. Who are we?

HARRY: No one of consequence.

EVELYN: What's all this bread for?

HARRY: Sandwiches. Raines law.

EVELYN: Ha. The old ones went bad while you were on vacation? You have a good time while the sandwiches rotted?

HARRY: Oh, you know me. Couldn't shut it off. Seven days on a beach and all I could think about was work. You know, the new kitchen. Maybe hire a hostess. You know?

EVELYN: A hostess! At the Lower Depths! Ha! Crazy.

HARRY: Naw. It's not so crazy ... I was in a bar down there in ... uh, New Orleans. They had a hostess. Some dive! She seats you, and uh ... I dunno. Points out the specials. Could have specials every night in here.

EVELYN: Drink specials! You make cocktails?

HARRY: Naw! Food specials! Monday night, chicken ... I dunno, grilled chicken? Caesar salad? Class it up. You know? Bess woulda liked it.

EVELYN: Here's to Bess.

HARRY: Yeah, yeah. Let me grab a ... Here's to Bess.

EVELYN: Good Christian woman.

HARRY: Good Christian woman.

(Sound cue #3.)

EVELYN: How about that sot in the corner?

HARRY: Not bothering nobody.

EVELYN: Been here long?

HARRY: As soon as I opened. Got started a bit earlier, I suspect.

EVELYN: On a bender, huh? Sleeping in a ditch or something. You don't think ... maybe Ted ... ?

HARRY: Naw. Ted's a good man. Honest. Well-liked.

EVELYN: He's liked, but ...

HARRY: He's well-liked. Sales is a good fit.

EVELYN: Selling hammers. Can you believe it.

HARRY: Somebody has to.

EVELYN: *(Sardonic)* The hammers ... they don't sell themselves.

HARRY: (*Sardonic*) Hear, hear.

EVELYN: It's just hard ... Ted on the road.

(*Sound cue #4.*)

HARRY: It's tough all over.

EVELYN: What to do all day? Come here, I guess!

HARRY: Sure! That's what I do!

EVELYN: Cheap drinks, conversation. And the
entertainment!

HARRY: Sure!

EVELYN: What's tonight?

HARRY: Oh, tonight it's ... Oh, Junebug.

EVELYN: I'll stay for that. I need some music. Get
my mind off Ted. Something romantic, you know? A
love song from when the world was young. What
time?

HARRY: Around eight, maybe.

EVELYN: Well, set em up slow. Or I'll sleep right
through it!

SCENE II

(Afternoon. The same tavern. The same people. Fresh drinks.)

(Sound cue #5.)

EVELYN: Put it back on that weird dinosaur show,
will you?

HARRY: Naw, those history programs don't make any
sense. I prefer the nature programs.

EVELYN: They think they can just say anything on TV.
I don't believe there to be a damn word in the
bible about dinosaurs on the ark.

HARRY: Been a long time since Sunday school for
me ...

EVELYN: Do you go to church though?

HARRY: Naw, not since Bess. It was her church,
really.

EVELYN: Good Christian woman.

HARRY: Good Christian woman.

EVELYN: Well I'm curious to see where they're going
with it.

HARRY: They've got you now!

EVELYN: I just think they're gonna run out of rope
before long. Dinosaurs on the ark!

HARRY: I prefer the nature programs.

EVELYN: Yeah. So your vacation was good?

HARRY: Seven days poolside.

EVELYN: I thought you said it was a beach.

HARRY: Oh, uh ... sure. No, it was a pool.

EVELYN: Was it a pool? Or a beach?

HARRY: Uh. Maybe I don't remember.

EVELYN: Weird.

(Sound cues #8, #9, in rapid succession.)

HARRY: You think I'm making this up?

(PEARL enters.)

EVELYN: Oh, no, I ...

PEARL: Hi Harry. Are the old folks here?

HARRY: Just me and Evelyn, all morning.

PEARL: Hi Evelyn.

HARRY: And that sot in the corner.

EVELYN: You're early, Pearl. Your parents usually don't roll in until the evening. Five or six.

HARRY: Everything alright?

PEARL: Oh, sure. Thanks. We just have some stuff to talk about.

EVELYN: Well, post up here and let's watch this weird dinosaur show. I'll stand you a drink. All Harry's pouring today is Hard Times whiskey.

PEARL: That all you got?

HARRY: They make a good whiskey.

PEARL: Sure. But ... you know, the rumors ...

HARRY: Rumors are rumors.

EVELYN: Put it on my tab, Harry.

HARRY: You driving, Pearl?

PEARL: Oh God, no — you know they want almost forty cents a gallon?

HARRY: (*Whistles.*)

PEARL: I had the early shift, so I just walked over.

EVELYN: In this heat!

HARRY: You still working over there at, uh ...

PEARL: "Ace Jewelry & Loan." Joe Hardin, proudly trading shortcuts for dignity six days a week since 1962.

EVELYN: At least they have the piety to shut down on Sunday.

PEARL: With Joe it's more likely a hangover.

HARRY: (*Sardonic*) Can't it be both?

EVELYN: Well, I know you see more trade than I do.

PEARL: Must be slow over at the hardware store.

EVELYN: Slow isn't the word. And now Ted is out shilling for Quality Hammers to make up income. (*Mocking*) "Have you considered Quality Hammers on your shelf? We made the switch recently and business has tripled! Well of course, I'd love to have dinner with your lovely daughters —"

HARRY: Evelyn ...

EVELYN: Hey, a man gets lonely out on the road! I know how it is!

(*Sound cue #10.*)

HARRY: Naw ...

PEARL: Harry, you've been traveling, right?

HARRY: Sure, yeah, down in New Orleans. Just taking a break.

PEARL: A vacation.

HARRY: Looking around for ... ideas.

EVELYN: Tell her about the pool or the beach!

HARRY: Evelyn ...

PEARL: Sounds nice!

EVELYN: And the hostess!

HARRY: I may just cut you off!

EVELYN: (*Looks dejected.*)

HARRY: (*Clears his throat.*)

PEARL: ... so, the pool? Or the beach?

EVELYN: Yeah, Harry, which was it?

HARRY: Well, it was a week of relaxation and now I'm back.

PEARL: You still look ... stressed, if you don't mind me saying ...

EVELYN: Ha, he just looks like that.

HARRY: ... sure, that's ... just how I look.

PEARL: I've never known you to leave town, Harry.

EVELYN: I've never known you to leave this bar!

HARRY: Oh ... no, I get out.

PEARL: You still drive that old truck?

HARRY: I dunno. I think they towed it eventually.

PEARL: The hell you say!

EVELYN: That must have been years ago, Harry!

PEARL: How do you get around now?

HARRY: I, uh ... I take the bus. Or I walk.

EVELYN: You walk to New Orleans?

HARRY: Watch it, Evelyn.

EVELYN: (*Looks dejected.*) I didn't mean nothing by it, Harry.

PEARL: Harry ... did you really go to New Orleans?

HARRY: Now, just where do you two get off?

PEARL: Sorry, forget it.

EVELYN: Sure, she didn't mean nothing by it. We'll lay off you and get back to drinking. Got to be ready for the entertainment!

PEARL: Oh, who's on tonight?

HARRY: Tonight it's Junebug.

PEARL: Works for me.

HARRY: Round eight, I think.

PEARL: I'll stick around. I could use some sad music. I came here to break some hearts.

EVELYN: What's that?

PEARL: To dash dreams.

HARRY: What are you talking about?

PEARL: Got to talk to my parents about their bar tab. I won't be paying for them any more.

HARRY: ... hang on, now ...

PEARL: No, it's time to cut the old folks loose and head west. I can't keep enabling them. You know?

HARRY: A debt's a debt, now.

PEARL: Harry, I'm sorry, I know you've got a vested interest and I don't want to make a victim of you. They'll come up with it somehow. I'm sure.

HARRY: No, it's not that ... the thing about debts is you never know when they'll ... be reckoned and called in.

EVELYN: What's that mean?

HARRY: (*Awkward*) I'm not saying anything, but ...

PEARL: I know debt, Harry. I see it all day. It's all around me, like a thick, gray fog. It's in the air I breathe. At the pawn shop, they have a new financial technology. I'm the ambassador — did you know that?

EVELYN: A new technology.

PEARL: It's a new kind of debt, Evelyn. And it's a mess.

HARRY: What do you mean, "a new kind of debt?"

PEARL: You know what we do at the pawn shop?
"Secured loans." We don't buy used goods, we take personal property as collateral on a loan. Then if you don't pay your loan, we sell your stuff.

HARRY: Sure, I get that.

PEARL: It works for people who couldn't get loans otherwise. I guess. Now Hardin has this new idea. He calls it a "payday advance." But it's just a short-term, unsecured loan with a wicked interest rate. There's no filtering. Most who borrow can't keep up. Then he has this big pile of debts with big returns on paper, and he can sell those debts to a bank.

HARRY: Huh. Who's borrowing like that?

PEARL: Who do you think? When Joe put me in charge of it? The only dark-skinned clerk in the whole shop?

EVELYN: You think so?

PEARL: I know it. "Don't you see, I look just like you, you can trust me." but Joe knows they won't pay on time. There's no money in lending, but there's money in usury.

HARRY: That's in the bible!

PEARL: I won't be his shill. I just have to save a bit more and then I go to California. I'll be a real clerk. At a credit union or something. Something ethical. I just have to get rid of these old parasites first ... "neither a borrower nor a lender be."

EVELYN: Well my tab is in good shape, I think.

HARRY: You're behind, too. Not as bad as the Slades, but ...

PEARL: Well, Harry, the only thing I owe you is a handshake and this whiskey you're about to pour me.

HARRY: Let's say this one's on me, Pearl.

PEARL: Naw, I'm good for it.

HARRY: ... for today, let's just say it's on me.

EVELYN: You're awfully strict about cash for a guy
who just got back from a vacation!

HARRY: Drink up, Evelyn. Maybe you'd better find
some other chair to sink into, so your debts
don't get reckoned out from under you.

PEARL: I'm out for a bit. I'll be back later to
disappoint a couple of old deadbeats.

EVELYN: I'll stay for the entertainment.

HARRY: I won't throw you out. But just remember what
I said.

SCENE III

(Evening. The same tavern. New patrons: ROSA and LAWRENCE, seated at a table, old, tired.)

(Sound cue #11.)

ROSA: "Management material," that's what he said.

LAWRENCE: Is that so?

ROSA: Eleven years behind a supermarket till, you're damn right.

LAWRENCE: Damn right.

ROSA: I have commitment and reliability. That's what he said. "Management material."

LAWRENCE: I bet they raise you to three dollars.

ROSA: I bet four! The responsibility!

LAWRENCE: *(Whistles.)* You see Pearl today?

ROSA: She was working all day, I think.

LAWRENCE: Usually doesn't work mornings. The Slade women are all getting promoted!

ROSA: I think they just put her on another shift.

LAWRENCE: What's the morning shift like at a pawn shop do you think?

ROSA: (*Sardonic*) Black coffee and desperation.

LAWRENCE: Let's celebrate. Harry! Another round!
We're celebrating two promotions in the family!

HARRY: Talk to Pearl today?

ROSA: She worked all day.

HARRY: She was here earlier looking for you two.
She'll be back; why don't you just pace yourselves 'til you talk to her.

LAWRENCE: We're celebrating!

HARRY: Pace yourselves or pay your bill.

ROSA: Why are you so stuck on a bill all of a sudden? Are you sun-struck?

EVELYN: Sure, you know it's twice as bright when you got the ocean and the pool both reflecting at you!

HARRY: Evelyn ...

LAWRENCE: You catch sight of any alligators?

HARRY: Sure, it was gators everywhere. A swamp.

EVELYN: (*Quietly*) ... big, sandy swamp, with a pool
and a hostess ...

HARRY: What's that?

EVELYN: Set 'em up, Harry. Junebug'll be here any
minute and we want to be receptive.

HARRY: Alright, but I keep track. There'll be a
reckoning ...

EVELYN: (*Sardonic*) You folks hear? About the
reckoning?

ROSA: First I've heard.

LAWRENCE: What's up, Harry? Short on your bills? Let
the books get away from you?

HARRY: That's an ignorant thing to say! Been doing
my books for ten years, keeping this place alive
all on my own ever since Bess! I oughta just let
you run that tab up until you drink yourselves
underground ...

ROSA: Now, he didn't mean nothing by it, Harry.

LAWRENCE: Yeah, Harry, you know I'm only joking.

HARRY: Sure, I know. I know you're joking.

EVELYN: Alright, let's drink ...

LAWRENCE: I better slow down. Hard Times whiskey comes on strong ... Don't want to end up like that boiled owl in the corner.

ROSA: I can't tell anymore.

LAWRENCE: I hear they have some secret ingredients. Or a secret process, or something.

ROSA: Something in the wood they age it in.

LAWRENCE: Yeah, something strange in that wood.

ROSA: Drink up, Larry.

LAWRENCE: Don't call me Larry. It sounds like an old man.

ROSA: Alright, silver fox.

LAWRENCE: Now, you ... I'll let it slide. Another?

ROSA: Well, I don't get paid until Friday, and I haven't seen Pearl all day.

LAWRENCE: She can pick it up when she comes back.

HARRY: Don't count on it ...

ROSA: What the hell kind of thing to say is that? Our own daughter.

HARRY: Generosities have ... limits ...

LAWRENCE: I don't know what she said, but the Slades are good for it. This family takes care of our own!

ROSA: Sure, we'll get it straightened out when she comes back.

LAWRENCE: Better get here soon, or she'll miss the entertainment!

EVELYN: Shouldn't Junebug be here now, Harry?

HARRY: Yep. That's what you get working with artists. Good entertainment, but it's always late. This is pretty late, though.

ROSA: We'll stick around.

LAWRENCE: We're celebrating!

ROSA: Sure ...

EVELYN: Yeah, not expecting a late-night, sentimental call ... and if he does, let it ring! The philanderer ...

HARRY: Last drink, Evelyn?

EVELYN: One more, Harry. I just want to hear some music.

HARRY: Well, she'd better show up soon ...

SCENE IV

(Late night. The same tavern. Ensemble, apprehensive.)

(Sound cues #13, #14.)

EVELYN: *(Drunk)* I love this song.

PEARL: *(Sober)* I've never heard it.

EVELYN: It's a love song. It's a valentine.

PEARL: Sure.

EVELYN: Ever been in love?

PEARL: Nope.

EVELYN: Me neither.

PEARL: Well, there's Ted ...

EVELYN: Son of a bitch!

PEARL: Evelyn ... You love Ted, right?

EVELYN: He's a son of a bitch, out on the road,
selling hammers and hammering shop girls.

PEARL: You know he isn't.

EVELYN: Well I wish he would!

PEARL: You don't mean that.

EVELYN: Sure. I don't mean that ... He's a son of a bitch, but you have to stick by your family.

PEARL: Sometimes ...

EVELYN: If it kills you.

PEARL: Do you? Why?

EVELYN: You just have to.

PEARL: Why?

EVELYN: I love this song.

PEARL: What if they're ... better off without us? My folks could get better with money. Ted could ... I don't know. Meet someone new?

EVELYN: He wouldn't. He's a good man.

PEARL: Would you?

EVELYN: (*Groans.*)

PEARL: All I want is to be free of parasites. Keep my own money, pay my own debts.

EVELYN: Don't be a fool. Buy me a drink.

PEARL: What do you want?

EVELYN: I want ... to ... run a hardware store with
my dear husband.

PEARL: Evelyn ...

EVELYN: I want a whiskey.

PEARL: That's all you want?

EVELYN: And a love song.

ROSA: She could have said.

LAWRENCE: Sure. Pearl, you could have said
something!

PEARL: I shouldn't have to say anything, Dad.

ROSA: Letting us just sit and soak up a debt.

LAWRENCE: We're celebrating. Pearl, it's supposed to
be a celebration! Don't you know the news?!

ROSA: Larry, drop it ...

PEARL: So celebrate! I'm not stopping you. But I'm
not paying for it.

LAWRENCE: Your mother's going to be a manager!

PEARL: So put a manager's salary on that tab!

ROSA: It's not ...

LAWRENCE: Sure, they said she's "management material!" What kind of material are you, Pearl?

ROSA: Maybe. He said he ... he said maybe.

PEARL: I'm made of sweat and blood and beer. Just like you raised me.

LAWRENCE: That's a damn strange thing to say! Sure, my hands are cut up, but ... you're a loan clerk and your mother is a manager at a supermarket!

ROSA: Damn it, Lawrence. It's not settled.

LAWRENCE: Not settled? O'Neill just handed you a promotion, why can't you celebrate? Rosa, what did he say to you? Remember what he said to you?

ROSA: He said ...

LAWRENCE: Didn't he?

ROSA: He said ... "maybe eventually."

LAWRENCE: (*Stunned*) "Maybe eventually."

ROSA: "Maybe eventually management material. Keep your chin up."

LAWRENCE: "Maybe eventually."

ROSA: Sooner or later ...

LAWRENCE: "Keep your chin up."

PEARL: How's that, dad?

LAWRENCE: Enough.

PEARL: You can still settle. It'll just take longer.

LAWRENCE: I should look again.

ROSA: Just sit with me, Larry. Let's just wait for
the music. Get away from the awfulness.

LAWRENCE: Sure.

ROSA: We can celebrate.

LAWRENCE: Sure. The Slade women are moving up.

ROSA: Eventually ...

HARRY: If she's this late, she's not coming.

EVELYN: Where's Junebug? Where's the entertainment?

HARRY: I said, "If she's this late."

EVELYN: She always shows up. I've got nothing better
to do.

HARRY: You gonna settle up first?

EVELYN: Don't be a fool!

HARRY: Watch it.

PEARL: I'll buy you a drink.

HARRY: How about a ... water, Evelyn, and maybe ...
call it a night?

EVELYN: What time is it? I love this song ... it's
relaxing. Like the sun ... by the pool ... on a
beach full of gators ...

HARRY: God dammit, Evelyn!

PEARL: Harry, your language. What would Bess think?

EVELYN: Good Christian woman.

HARRY: God-dammit, who cares if I did or didn't go
to New Orleans!

PEARL: She didn't mean anything by it ...

HARRY: Maybe I just sat here alone in the dark.
Would you like that? Evelyn? That what you want
to hear?

EVELYN: Watching nature programs in the dark.

HARRY: Just me and the deer and the gators and the
God-damned dinosaurs! It was Harry's ark, Evelyn!
Two-by-two, out of the flood and into the
poorhouse!

PEARL: She's just drunk.

HARRY: All on my dime! Well there's gonna be a reckoning. All of you. Just stick around and you'll see.

ROSA: What are you talking about, Harry? What reckoning?

EVELYN: I want to hear another love song.

LAWRENCE: Where's Junebug?

HARRY: I hope she never shows up. I can't pay her, the money's run out!

PEARL: What's that?

HARRY: It's gone, the money's all gone! I let you sponges soak up so many free drinks now I can't even stock the whiskey without striking a deal.

EVELYN: No more whiskey?

PEARL: Harry ... what kind of deal?

HARRY: It doesn't matter.

LAWRENCE: You can't blame us. Harry, we're just a little short from time to time.

ROSA: Sure.

HARRY: Just leave, Pearl. Just trust me.

PEARL: (*Worried*) OK. I'm leaving. Are you sure ...

HARRY: I'm sure. You don't deserve this.

(Pearl leaves.)

EVELYN: All I want is a love song! And a whiskey.

HARRY: You'll have plenty of time for whiskey.

EVELYN: I just want ... to be left alone ... that
man is like a straitjacket.

HARRY: I know, Evelyn.

EVELYN: If only he'd ... meet some tall, young thing
on the road ...

HARRY: I know.

ROSA: Eleven years ... behind a supermarket till ...

LAWRENCE: Keep your chin up, Rosa. Eventually ...

ROSA: Maybe ... "maybe eventually."

HARRY: Now, I ... you all should clear out.

EVELYN: Where would we go?

ROSA: Just let us wait. Let us wait for Junebug.

LAWRENCE: We're good for it. We just want to have a
few drinks, see the entertainment, then we'll go
home.

HARRY: You don't understand.

ROSA: Sure. We know you're struggling. We're all struggling, Harry. You said you have a deal, right?

HARRY: God-dammit! You don't understand me!

EVELYN: Harry, your language.

LAWRENCE: What's to understand? Rosa's in line for this promotion! We'll settle our debt soon.

HARRY: All they want is debt! They feed on it! They put it in the whiskey!

EVELYN: (*Sobering up*) What? What the hell are you saying?

HARRY: He'll be here soon. The boy from Hard Times. There'll be a reckoning.

LAWRENCE: Harry, our debt's not to the distillery ...

HARRY: It is now. I traded it. I sold it. I'm sorry. I'm so sorry ...

(*Sound cue #15.*)

CURTAIN

PROPERTY LIST

Bar — Whiskey bottles in various states of depletion. One brick. Half loaf of supermarket bread. Trowel. Between two and seven bar stools.

Above, behind bar — Television. Sign reading "Hard Times Served" (directly above television).

Tables — Whiskey bottles in various states of depletion. Glasses. On each table, small plate bearing a sandwich (slice of bread, brick, slice of bread). Cheap chairs.

Stage left — Jukebox.

Stage right — Bar door.

SOUND CUES

Sound 1: Distant highway.

Sound 2: Drone #1.

Sound 3: Glasses clinking.

Sound 4: Car passing by.

Sound 5: Distant highway.

Sound 6: Nature program.

Sound 7: Drone #2.

Sound 8: Door opening.

Sound 9: Door closing.

Sound 10: Car passing by.

Sound 11: Distant highway.

Sound 12: Drone #3.

Sound 13: Distant highway.

Sound 14: Jukebox love song.

Sound 15: Disconcerting hum.

A BAR-FLY

SCENE I

(Bar-fly sits alone at a table with two glasses, one empty. Newspaper on table lower right. Ash tray with two cigarette butts upper right. Sandwich left.)

BAR-FLY: *(Examines empty glass. Examines full glass.)*

BAR-FLY: *(Looks at ashtray. Blows gently with pursed lips. Observes ash configuration.)*

BAR-FLY: *(Coughs, wipes nose with sleeve. At length, inspects sleeve.)*

BAR-FLY: *(Remembers something trivial about the prior evening, looks up suddenly. Looks left, right.)*

BAR-FLY: *(Skims newspaper article about cross-country travel by hot air balloon. Visualizes hot air balloon launch.)*

BAR-FLY: *(Forgets.)*

SCENE II

(Bar-fly sits alone at table.)

BAR-FLY: *(Straightens shirt. Checks pocket for currency. Empty-handed. Begins to calculate.)*

BAR-FLY: *(Makes mental note of room's exits. Considers possibility of escape.)*

BAR-FLY: *(Inspects exit. Estimates paces to exit.)*

BAR-FLY: *(Considers social effects of sudden exit. Weighs options. Fumbles in pocket.)*

BAR-FLY: *(Pretends to read. Encounters troubling headline. Bites lip. Pretends to inspect newspaper photograph. Recognizes neighbor, pictured left. Averts eyes.)*

BAR-FLY: *(Makes mental checklist for planned exit.)*

BAR-FLY: *(Adjusts position, prepares to bolt.)*

BAR-FLY: *(Remembers half-full drink. Pauses, sighs, relaxes shoulders.)*

SCENE III

(Bar-fly slumps alone at table.)

BAR-FLY: *(Remembers. Scowls at memory of unkind word.)*

BAR-FLY: *(Remembers. Considers retorts to perceived slights.)*

BAR-FLY: *(Remembers arguments, forgets specifics.)*

BAR-FLY: *(Scans forecast. Tries to remember day of week. Considers past or future thunderstorm.)*

BAR-FLY: *(Scratches absently at table. Silently repeats prayer to stupor.)*

SCENE IV

(Bar-fly slumps alone, half-asleep on table.)

BAR-FLY: *(Struggles to remember mental checklist.)*

BAR-FLY: *(Drunkenly fumbles in pockets, remembers.
Places right hand on chin.)*

BAR-FLY: *(Places left hand on leg. Leans
precariously into table. Closes eyes.)*

BAR-FLY: *(Opens eyes, scans table for landmarks.
Remembers, spits.)*

BAR-FLY: *(Glances down at newspaper. Tries to be
interested.)*

BAR-FLY: *(Sighs, shuffles, surrenders.)*

CURTAIN

PROPERTY LIST

Table — Small plate bearing sandwich: slice of bread, brick, slice of bread. Two glasses, one empty and one half-empty. Ash tray containing two cigarette butts. Local newspaper from day of presentation.

SELECTED REVIEWS

STUDENT PRODUCTION IS AUDACIOUS

"We have the right to lie," said dramatist Antonin Artaud, "but not about the heart of the matter." Obscure playwright Lem Doolittle seems to have made a project of this distinction in his play "A Reckoning."

Originally written shortly before his mysterious disappearance several decades ago, and published "posthumously," the play is a favorite among companies wishing to show their knowledge of local cultural history. How unexpected, then, to encounter a production that treats the script so irreverently! This student company has gone so far as to change the title of the play, and even add a new character: a silent, uncredited actor who pantomimes drunkenness with all the grace of a dog trying to escape from under a duvet.

Still, this staging of "The Entertainment" stays true to the heart of Doolittle's work. Perhaps that's all these students owe him.

Lily Thurston,
Adair County News

WAKEFIELD STUNS IN "ENTERTAINMENT"

The premiere at Buffalo Street Student Theatre was a curiosity. Two obscure plays by a local author were simultaneously presented, for the pleasure of a handful of baffled patrons. The result: an absorbing, if unfocused, drama about the ills of debt and dishonesty.

Certainly, the highlight is Sarah Wakefield's performance. As Pearl Slade, the young woman who tries to rid herself of her parents' debts, she is a revelation. Sadly, her verve and imagination do little to salvage the tepid pantomime of the "bar-fly," a character who perhaps could have done with a few lines after all.

Levi Tolbert,
Kentucky Post

STIFFLY WRITTEN, BUT WELL ACTED

There aren't many characters in "The Entertainment," now playing at Buffalo Street Student Theatre, but director James B. Carrington has been able to give them all enough dimension to make them interesting.

Edgar Foy's performance as dejected bartender Harry is convincing, but this is not a role into which an actor can project much power. The audience pities him, without ever really knowing why. Indeed, despite the cast's well-rounded portrayals, sparks only fly once or twice.

*Zoe Hook,
Louisville Times*

"ENTERTAINMENT" BORES AT TIMES

The conclusion of "The Entertainment" is obscure modernism posing as tragedy. We can only presume that this is another of this company's experimental interventions into the original script, as it betrays the human drama so carefully erected over the prior three scenes.

Lula Chamberlain's set is unpretentious and realistic, with a handful of confident lighting cues. The dialog has an easy facility for bar-room banter, but a disconcerting habit of settling into familiar grooves.

An uneven but decent production.

*Nathan Masters,
Lexington Herald*