

Think Outside the Box

By Jaclyn Lash

jglash@syr.edu  
305-450-7711

THE SCREEN IS BLACK.

We hear the bustling of morning traffic and a young boy's heavy lisp.

BOY (V.O.)  
Do you have 25 cents? Hey, do you  
have 25 cents?

WOMAN #1 (V.O.)  
Here you go, sweetie.

BOY (V.O.)  
Do you have 25 cents?

MAN #1 (V.O.)  
Yup! Here you go, kid.

FADE IN:

EXT. BUS STOP - MORNING

SAM, 7, is below average height and above average weight for his age. He stands amidst a crowd of tall adults dressed in business suits waiting for the bus to arrive.

He grinds two quarters with one hand and tugs on people's work pants with the other.

SAM  
Hey, do you have 25 cents?

We see Sam is missing his two front teeth.

SAM (CONT'D)  
Could somebody give me 25 cents?

The bus slowly approaches the stop.

SAM (CONT'D)  
Does anybody have 25 cents?

INT. BUS - MORNING

Everyone files onto the bus. Sam is stopped by the BUS DRIVER who mumbles his raspy words.

BUS DRIVER  
Not today, kid.

SAM  
But this is all I got.

BUS DRIVER  
And you're a quarter short!

SAM  
Not everyone would hand them over!

BUS DRIVER  
I don't blame them!

The bus driver nods his head.

BUS DRIVER(CONT'D)  
Don't you go asking people on my  
bus today. You hear me?

SAM  
I hear ya.

BUS DRIVER  
I mean it, kid. Read the sign.

The bus driver points to a sign that reads "No Soliciting."

SAM  
I don't know how to read!

BUS DRIVER  
Well it says no asking for quarters  
on my bus!

The bus driver grabs his microphone and says:

BUS DRIVER(CONT'D)  
Excuse me, folks. No one is to give  
this little rascal any money today.  
That is all.

SAM  
But I'm saving up!

Sam makes his way to the back of the bus but stops to ask a  
James Bond-looking man for a quarter.

SAM (CONT'D)  
Could you give me 25 cents?

The man pretends to answer a phone call.

SAM (CONT'D)  
C'mon!

Sam turns to an older man holding a newspaper.

SAM (CONT'D)  
Hey you. Give me 25 cents.

The old man turns his page.

SAM (CONT'D)  
It's not for me!

Sam stands on a seat to search for his next victim.

BUS DRIVER  
Get down from there, boy!

Sam sticks out his tongue and blows; spit flies everywhere.

He turns to the closest woman.

SAM  
Could you give me 25 cents?

WOMAN #2  
Perdón, no te entiendo.  
(Translation: Sorry, I don't  
understand you.)

The bus comes to a screeching halt.

Everyone shuffles off. The bus driver stops Sam.

BUS DRIVER  
Are you out of your stinking mind?

SAM  
Hey, thanks for nothing!

BUS DRIVER  
You think you're royalty or  
something? Always expecting people  
to hand you over money?

SAM  
But -

BUS DRIVER  
Do it again, and I won't let you  
back on my bus.

SAM  
But what am I supposed to do?

BUS DRIVER  
Get cuter? Be politer? I don't  
know... Think outside the box, kid.  
Run along now.

EXT. SIDEWALK - MORNING

Sam hops off the bus and scurries two blocks to school.

He mocks the bus driver:

SAM  
Get cuter? Be politer? Think  
outside the box?

Sam drags his feet along the grown with his head hanging low. He repeats:

SAM (CONT'D)  
Get cuter? Be politer?

He takes a few more steps and stumbles upon a cardboard box. Sam raises his head and notices a cluster of empty boxes from a recent food drive.

SAM (CONT'D)  
Think outside the box...

Sam examines the boxes and lifts up the biggest one. The box is so big he can barely hug it and certainly cannot see the ground in front of him.

INT. SCHOOL - MORNING

Sam walks down the busy school hallway capturing the attention of his classmates.

STUDENT #1  
Whatchya got there, Sam?

STUDENT #2  
Hey, what's that, Sam?

STUDENT #3  
Sam, what's in the box?

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Sam enters room 313, places the box atop his desk and glances over at his teacher.

MS. WHITTINGTON, 42, spent 6 years in the military and has the stature and attitude to prove it. She's known for abusing her 3-strike policy.

MS. WHITTINGTON  
Benson! Report!

Sam walks over to her desk.

MS. WHITTINGTON (CONT'D.)  
 What's in the box, Benson.

He whispers so that the other students cannot hear him.

SAM  
 Nothing.

MS. WHITTINGTON  
 Nothing? Absolutely nothing?

SAM  
 Absolutely nothing.

MS. WHITTINGTON  
 You better not be lying, mister.

SAM  
 I'm not!

MS. WHITTINGTON  
 Don't you raise your voice at me.

SAM  
 But -

MS. WHITTINGTON  
 No "buts" expect for your butt in  
 your seat!

SAM  
 But -

MS. WHITTINGTON  
 That's a strike, Benson! Now sit  
 down!

Sam returns to his chair. He thinks. Then he takes out a pencil from his backpack and pokes two holes into the side of the box. A few students notice.

THE TWINS (CHARLOTTE and LISA), 7, who wear their hair in pigtails, dress identically and say everything in unison, approach Sam's desk.

SAM  
 May I help you?

THE TWINS  
 What's that?

Sam looks up.

SAM  
Patience, my ladies.

THE TWINS  
As if!

Sam takes out a marker from his bag and draws "25¢" in huge letters on the side.

THE TWINS  
No, seriously, Sam.

SAM  
Why don't you pay up and figure it out.

THE TWINS  
No way!

MATT, 8, is the cat that curiosity killed. He's the brainiac of the 3rd grade, and always says "you know" at the end of every sentence.

MATT  
You're always pulling this crap, you know?

SAM  
C'com, Matt. You're a little interested, aren't ya?

MATT  
You don't know me, you know?

SAM  
I know you can't resist looking inside.

THE TWINS  
Don't do it, Matt. It's *Sam*.

SAM  
Oh, shut up, you two.

MS. WHITTINGTON  
Sam! Language! That's a strike!

SAM  
Well, are you going to pay me or not?

MATT  
You know...

SAM  
C'mon Matt.

MATT  
I can't believe I'm doing this, you know?

Matt hands over a quarter to Sam. He turns the box, removes his glasses and squints to look inside.

THE TWINS  
What do you see!?

MATT  
I can't see anything.

SAM  
It's probably because you took off your glasses.

MATT  
Well, then I want my money back!

SAM  
Sorry, kiddo... It's mine now.

THE TWINS  
I want to look! Hey, me first! No, me!

MS. WHITTINGTON  
Everyone! Quiet down!

The group begins to whisper.

SAM  
Ladies, ladies, please. You each will get a turn.

THE TWINS  
She always gets to go first. I do not! Yes you do! Ugh.

Each twin scurries to find a quarter.

THE TWINS  
Found one!



SAM

Oof. That was a close one, but I think Charlotte said she found hers first.

LISA

That's no fair! We all know you have a crush on her.

SAM

Do not!

THE TWINS

Do totally!

Charlotte squats down to look inside the box.

CHARLOTTE

Matt was right! There's nothing in here!

LISA

Let me see!

Lisa looks inside the box and breaks from whispering.

LISA (CONT'D)

What the hell?!

MS. WHITTINGTON

Lisa! That's a strike!

More students curiously hand over quarters but they quickly become disappointed.

SAM

You all aren't looking hard enough.

The class lashes out at Sam. Over the ruckus we hear the twins mock Sam's lisp.

THE TWINS

Whatever, *Tham*. At least we can say "She sells sea shells by the sea shore!"

Sam stands quietly.

THE TWINS (CONT'D)

C'mon, try it!

He builds up the courage.

SAM

She thells thea thells by the thea  
thore.

The classroom breaks out in laughter.

THE TWINS

Told ya so!

MATT

Yeah, Sam. Are those teeth ever  
going to grow back? Or are you  
stuck, excuse me, thuck like that  
forever?

The students laugh even louder.

MS. WHITTINGTON

That's enough! Sam! You and your  
box have caused nothing but  
trouble! That's strike three -  
you're out!

His classmates continue to laugh.

MATT

You should've seen this coming, you  
know?

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Sam grabs his box and backpack and runs out of the  
classroom.

While he attempts to catch his breath in the hallway, he  
reaches into his pocket and pulls out 5 quarters. He grins.  
Sam slowly walks down the hallway to a vending machine.

He sets down the box in front of the machine, steps up onto  
it and enters his 5 quarters.

SAM

Where is it... Where is it... Ah,  
ha! Gotchya.

He presses the buttons "C9."

M&M's hit the bottom of the machine. Sam jumps off the box,  
picks up his backpack and exits the school doors.

EXT. STREET - AFTERNOON

He heads to his home that is essentially shaped like a box. It's small and fragile and painted light brown. The grass is dried and surrounded by a metal gate.

INT. HOME - AFTERNOON

Sam enters his front door, which is unlocked. He closes it behind him.

SAM (CONT'D)

Mom?

He looks around.

SAM (CONT'D)

Margo-Michelle? Is anybody home?

He turns the corner to the living room. There he finds his 3-year-old little sister resting on the couch as the T.V. plays Spongebob. He turns it off.

He crouches down by his sister and whispers:

SAM (CONT'D)

Margo-Michelle? Margo?

She slowly wakes up, barely opening her eyes.

MARGO-MICHELLE

Tham!

He holds out the bag of M&M's.

MARGO-MICHELLE (CONT'D)

For me?

He continues to whisper:

SAM

M&M's for my M&M. Happy birthday,  
Margo.

She giggles.

MARGO-MICHELLE

Thank you Thammy.

Sam kisses her on the cheek and exits the room.

Margo closes her eyes holding the pack of M&M's close to her heart.

FADE TO BLACK.