

BIG ETHEL

A spotlight comes up downstage center on a lectern. Big Ethel Satterwhite, brusque, down-to-earth, enters stage right in colorful nurse's scrubs, stethoscope around her neck, carries a shopping bag, strides to the lectern.

BIG ETHEL. *(Addresses the audience.)* Hmm. There's a lot more of y'all than I expected. Now, it's none of my beeswax what you drank, smoked, snorted or stole that got you locked in here with me this morning, that's between you and your parole officer. But the state of Texas has agreed you're participation today *will* count toward your community service. I'm Big Ethel Satterwhite, L.V.N., and this pilot program, run by our very own county sheriff's department and forced on us by the *brain-trust* in Austin, is built on the paper-thin notion that better nutrition leads to better health which somehow leads to better decision-makin' habits in the long run. *(Beat.)* And I'll buy that if *you* will. Now thanks for agreeing to forego you're usual breathalyzer and urine tests this morning for blood pressure and glucose checks instead. And having just looked over those numbers, I think it might be best if we throw ourselves into today's lesson ... before any of y'all start strokin' out. Now if pork rinds and Dr. Pepper are two of your major food groups, you are *makin' bad choices*. And just like you can choose to stop stealin' your Grandma's social security checks, you can also choose to stop shovelin' down greasy slop. You cannot be alert and on the ball if all you've had for breakfast is a cigarette, a beer and a bear claw. Heck, stuffed full of junk like that, who *wouldn't* race out and rob the closest 7-11? And there you have the debatable connection between poor nutrition and a life of crime. So, if you never want to post bail again, remember these words *(Pulls a cabbage and a large cookie from shopping bag, holds one in each hand.)* "more cabbage ... less cookie!" Take this cabbage. It's full of fiber, Vitamins K, C and B-6 with the only drawback bein' it can give you enough gas to generate one day's electricity for a small subdivision in the greater Houston area. On the other hand, take this cookie. It's a caramel, double-chocolate chip cookie I made for my husband, O.C., not that he noticed. He's retired and does nothin' but sit in that Barcalounger of his, glued to the TV which makes it real easy to forget our weddin' anniversary five years in a row – but I digress. Back to this cookie ... *(Takes a whiff.)* Which smells ... dang, that smells *great*. *(Regains composure.)* It ... a, it doesn't really give you many usable nutrients. *(Pinches off a bite.)* Wow. That's got to be the best thing I ever put in my *head*! *(Takes another bite, swoons at the taste, pulls herself together.)* Which goes to prove you should ... uh, choose cabbage every ... *(stares at the cookie, then at the cabbage, gives up.)* Oh who am I kiddin', only a *moron* wouldn't go for the cookie! *(Hurles the cabbage offstage, then, conspiratorially.)* Look, as usual, those out-of-touch politicians in Austin wouldn't know reality if it bit 'em in the butt. Let's just cut to it – y'all all know right from wrong, so just *do* it! And if you don't want to be stuck in these idiotic classes ever again, *stop makin' stupid decisions*! Choke down something green once in a while and don't act the fool in public! And if you won't breathe a word about this to the Sheriff, meet me out back. I've got a whole Tupperware full of these caramel beauties in my Cutlass. So, good luck, *vaya con Dios, class dismissed!* *(Takes another bite, groans with pleasure. Blackout.)*