

# 3 Proses



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## **Social Work**

Is being homeless your business? If so and you are a U.S. citizen, why not apply for a License to be Poor? To get it, you'll need to complete an application, a short test, and donate a quarter. Or spare change. No one will be denied for lack of funds. Once you pass these simple requirements, you can live and work anywhere, especially outside luxury boutiques, upscale restaurants, start-ups, and high tech campuses, which much to our municipal surprise, persons such as yourself take little advantage. Live/work spaces are in high demand these days! Don't compete with uncertified, toothless thugs, just extend your legitimate ID, your license to ask, your card to kindly extract small amounts of cash money from those who have more than they need, especially in San Francisco where the income disparity may be the greatest on earth. If you sign up for the Workshop, you'll get tips on the best sites and the best strategies. Geography is destiny and beggars must be choosy. Here's a sample of our simple, but important test questions. There are no wrong answers!

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Are you a veteran of any war? If so, which one?

all  some

What is your gender?  male  female  fluid  don't remember

housed?  unhoused  semi-housed

best place to beg is on the left of a one-way freeway entrance

best place to beg is on the right of a one-way freeway entrance

best face to have is  a smile  a frown  a scream

any combination of the above

your signage skills are:

excellent to superior

fine, legible

attended art school

studied drone striking with the military

calligraphic

best place to beg is alone on a dark street so that the rare driver who spots you will gladly stop

best place to beg is while circulating a jazz concert in a public park with others wearing tee shirts that say "Arise Ye Beggars/Unionize"

best struggle to support is \$15 an hour minimum begging wage

best place to beg is by a newspaper kiosk whose owner makes change

Having the appropriate equipment for panhandling is imperative. In this country, no one uses hats anymore to collect change, unless you've put on an attenuated version of Hamlet in the Park. But performing is not begging. Performing for money is payment for services rendered. If you would like a permit for Performing for Services Rendered, please contact our Rendered

Services Division. Poverty is a much more complex operation due to cause and effect, and thus trying to ameliorate it requires a special license. Street artists have stood still in Las Ramblas of Barcelona in a variety of poses— Golden Man, Silver Ballerina, Statue of Liberty Woman; flamenco dancers have performed in the Praça do Rossio of Lisbon; performers have levitated on the streets of Prague for ages; mimes and puppeteers in Paris, etc., for centuries, performing an important public service that entertains *les enfants* and *les tourists*.

Begging, without offering entertainment in return, however, requires entirely different and highly coordinated skills. You must create signage, you must accost strangers and passersby, you must smile, you must also know how to deal with the inevitable pit bull that accompanies the young runaway. All this, often in rapid succession! During your training, you will learn how to be a mentor to apprentice beggars. We've developed a special federally funded Title 9101112131435x yz11 outreach program for those qualified beggars over 40 to accompany youth beggars. (This will add substantially to your monthly stipend after you acquire your license.) We're very excited about this, as several mayors, governors, and presidents for the last forty years have expressed, at one time or another, enthusiasm, though during their terms of office were too engaged in foreign wars to participate. However, we have recently received both government and private grants to pursue this program and achieved our non-profit status! This means that the monthly income you report to us will be nominally taxed at a small percent and serve to refund new programs for others such as yourself.

We are emphatically committed to persons such as yourselves legally taking from those who have more than enough to finance those who have not enough. Our recognition program will teach you how to assess such persons.

If you want to know who we are, we can assure you who we are not: we are not Communists. We are an anonymous group of individuals, some of whom were once were tooth fairies and who provided their children with a weekly allowance, whether or not they cleaned up their rooms or took out the trash. We believe in a guaranteed annual income for those who want to live modestly, as artists in Ireland can. Is Ireland a Communist country? No sir! You could say we are basically neo-neo-liberals and many of us are on neo-Paleolithic diets. Some of us aren't. Meat does not make

us more aggressive. (And btw, we do not believe that all men are testosterone driven, though we do know some and have received substantial donations from those whose down there part has largely driven their existence.)

If you've ever gone hungry to feed your kids, you'll know exactly what we mean. We have long experience visiting developing nations. We have been on cultural missions, brigades, and fact-finding trips. We find their beggars cleverer, on the whole, than those of the United States. For instance, in our recent excursion to Quetzaltenango, Guatemala, we saw no less than five individuals in the streets of this charming city pretending that their legs had been amputated! We saw children under the age of five offering *chicle* on buses from a small dusty box that they fashioned to resemble those of the 1940s. It was similar in beach towns in Mexico; but these children had clearly inherited the *chicle* boxes their mothers before them had used. Begging can be a family business in countries where poverty is inherited. Our NGO has studied gypsies worldwide whose menacing deeply dark eyes promise to hijack wallets from back pockets rather than simply ask for coinage. There's safety in numbers and camaraderie we've only seen in tent cities or refugee camps. We have always been particularly enamored of small slender boys who board local buses to make the rounds of captive audiences. Some sing in high-pitched voices, pre-pubescent and innocent. We scoop them up and teach them how to recognize tourists, because there is no use in asking for money from your own. Education is key! A *campesino* with two chickens stashed in the overhead compartment is unlikely to have any spare cash. We give these boys education which includes lessons in foreign languages of their choice, plus benefits. Of course they're nothing like the street children of Europe who work the crowds with sophisticated psychology. A mixture of guilt and sadness with a dash of amusement arises in individuals. And guilt is precisely what the poor must keep playing on. If you fought in a war and haven't yet obtained proper medical treatment, you're entitled to vets benefits. You're poor and you're going to stay that way, so we urge you to get licensed to be poor. If you work at a minimum wage job, you're poor, and unless a rich aunt you didn't know you had dies and leaves you her paid-up house, you'll stay poor. You know how to work, so work

it. If you just got evicted with your four children and your grandfather is in prison, and your mother is dating a guy who is in prison and you don't have a high school diploma, what will you do? No, you need cash. Your once beautiful body can't save you now. You need to get out on the streets and equalize the economy. Your poverty needs to be legitimized. You need to be a card carrying poor person. There are so many people in this country; you're one of them! You're not a religious mendicant! You'll never visit India, but you can imagine the number of successful orphans there, can't you? Many of them are blind and crippled. You aren't. If you were you would be taken care of by the state. With a license to be poor you'll beg better and earn more. Get one today.

## Late

In recurring dreams am I late, very late. I can't find parking. In waking life, sometimes I would park in the red to not be late, then rush back to the car and drive off, only to circle the same streets, imagining a space vacated during the previous few moments of rash action. Desperation in those days inevitably involved scarcity, an absolute lack, or an absolute impossibility of arriving on time in the brightly lit world of those dreams, which always occurred long before necessity—that is, months before—which is to say so long before my appointment-- the anxiety of having been chosen among the hundreds of others equally qualified, brought about the fear of inability on all levels. Three or four times I parked successfully, though relatively far away. The walk involved traversing dirt paths, always winding up at a vast intersection of empty lots. I would keep veering to the left or right and suddenly approach a barrio unknown to me. Widows in black shawls rocked on their verandas, fanning themselves in the autumn heat. Men stared at me, as though I were in strange costume, inappropriate to the time and context of the town. Dust gathered and whirled around my naked ankles. I could speak the language but I could not recognize the locale. I walked on and through the foreign landscape. At last I reached a hillside. To climb it or to hike around it pressed heavily on my thoughts. Where would it lead? How would I climb in the shoes I was wearing for work. My sense of direction, poor under ordinary circumstances, failed me entirely. Surely I didn't know the city well, but this new obstacle posed a completely ad hoc spontaneous response. If I could only write the coordinates, consult a map or a native. But I had reached something akin to a tree line—devoid of people, even the last vestiges of wildflowers that sometimes hide behind shrubs still blooming or just blooming in their own spring. The alarm sounded and I woke up. Standing beside the bed whose blankets resembled crumpled papers, my neck and shoulders ached immensely from such tossing and turning during the night.

When I used to park a mile from a university where we both once taught, I would pass Angela Davis walking towards me. Both of us were weighted down by satchels of books. The wind from the bay often blew hard in that treeless suburb, misting the lawns. Often fog

shrouded the distant and near view. We would smile at one another in complicity.

Does a dream of being late mean the dreamer would actually like to be late? I once had a friend who was always fastidiously early. Which is as bad as being late because one is not ready to receive an early person. If this friend was late, you knew she wasn't going to be there at all. This was before cell phones. The next morning she'd call with a story: I got on the freeway in the rain, I couldn't see a thing because the windshield wiper on my side stopped working. I kept trying to crane my neck to look out but my breath fogged up the windows. Then I couldn't see anything. I panicked. I took the next exit and it led me to somewhere in West Oakland. I stopped in front of a chain link fenced lot with a sign that said, Dick's Foreign Auto Parts. I grabbed my umbrella, got out of the car and it didn't bode well with three Dobermans yowling at the top of their lungs just sensing me on the sidewalk. I looked for an entrance. There was a buzzer above the gate. I buzzed. The Dobermans kept up. An old man in dirty overalls shuffled to the front and asked what the hell I wanted in this storm. We're closed, he growled. It's Sunday. I explained about the windshield wiper and offered him money if he would let me use his phone. Oh yeah, he says, if I let you use the phone, everybody who gets stuck here will want to. Do drivers get stuck here? I asked. All the time, he barked. Please help me, I said, using all my feminine charms. I need a man to fix the wiper. You can't fix a windshield wiper, hon. You got to replace it. How much did you say? I've got \$50 on me, I said, and a credit card. He glanced at my Mazda. I might could have the right wiper for you. But you can't use my phone cause it's inside. I don't let customers inside. I don't let anybody inside. I'm late, I cried, I'm late for a wedding. A wedding, he repeated. Life is just one wedding after another then you get funerals. The rain let up a bit. He led me into the lot. There were all kinds of car parts, junk, salvage, organized by make and model. Some large parts like fenders were stuffed into covered bins with signs above them: Toyota Corolla, etc. And shelves with awnings, neatly displaying headlights. Honda Civic, Saab, Acura SX. Tires had a sort of garden of their own, as if they grew in stacks. I was wearing high heels, silk fuchsia high heels and they'd already turned brown in the mud, so I followed the old man as he trekked through his stock. We walked in circles around sheds of brake boots, horn grills,

headrests, shocks and struts, belts and hoses, fuel filters, engines, transmissions.

Suddenly, he got breathless. He wheezed and coughed and leaned against a pile of hoods. You okay, I asked. Yep, just need to sit for bit. Let's go over there, he pointed to a sign about a city block away. We reached an out building of interiors. He chose a Mercedes backseat. I don't know why but I remembered that Eichmann worked in a Mercedes factory in Argentina after WW II. I sat with the old man; I offered him a cigarette.

Got kids? he asked. Yes, I said, three boys. I got three girls, he said. We smoked and talked about what they did, who they married, and why. What happened to our spouses. Whether the Raiders had a chance, who would run for president and why and why not. I didn't hear the dogs anymore. After a while, the sun came out. We got up and walked some more. One of my shoes got stuck in the mud and sucked it off my foot. We stopped, he let me lean on him, and he pulled it out for me, wiped it off on his overalls, and helped me put it on again.

Oh, I said, I feel like Cinderella. Yeah, he said. I'm your prince. If you like a prince with terminal cancer. His disclosure startled me. I asked about it and he told me. He was through with treatment. They found out too late and it didn't help anyway. I'm so sorry, I said, shaking my head. Why do you say that, he asked. Why would you be sorry for a complete stranger?

Soon he found the right wiper and installed it on my windshield. When he finished, I looked at my watch and knew the wedding would be over. Well, I said, how much do I owe you? How about ten bucks, he said. I pulled out a twenty. I don't have change, this being Sunday, he said. That's fine, I said. I appreciate your hospitality.

After listening to her story, I finally said, sounds more interesting than the wedding. I left the reception early. She laughed and said, well, I've got a doctor's appointment soon, I don't want to be late. So long.

My friend's story reminded me that I was trained to be on time, even at the expense of the sort of adventure this friend always seemed to get herself into because she was generally early. I am not one to show up all breathy and blown by the wind, no I'm not a

blousy type. I walk fast, think fast, my pulse beats fast, maybe too fast.

Nothing in the Bay Area starts on time and generally, there's no excuse for late. Even movies are late. Even jury duty doesn't start on time. No self-respecting New Yorker would put up with it. The mas o menos schedule of public transportation is only on time when you are late. You hear the swoosh of the doors closing and the squeak of the cars departing way up at the top of the escalator you were just about to run down.

No one is in a hurry here. Try calling the police! This area has a lot of freelance workers who apparently work for themselves, not you. Gardeners, handymen, painters, consultants. They arrive when they can, though they always give you a specific time. When I was young, I dated a lawyer who never arrived when he said he would. I would make an elaborate dinner. He was two hours late, ambling in from tennis with his white shirt half unbuttoned.

He never made excuses or told stories, he simply showed up when he did. (Later I'm told, most of his children were born before he reached the hospital.) Out of town guests, unused to his habits, would often demand the meal they'd driven half the day for. By dessert they'd remark, leave him, he won't notice until it's too late.

I have come to an uncertain conclusion: the too early are anxious, fearful of some judgment that they'll be late. What are the late? Do they lose track of time? Is time not built into their human consciousness? This poses deep philosophical perhaps metaphysical questions. Do they not notice time? Do they plan to be on time and then become ensnared, as my friend of the first part of this account, in all the minute aspects of life that can intercede between them and an appointment? Did people in other centuries arrive not just two hours late but two days or two months, given the modes of transport? Those who traversed the great plains and valleys and rivers, hazarding the deeply unfamiliar and unknown, such as local people, highway robbers, wild animals who could not abide them and hijacked their wagons, etc.?

You said you'd be here latest April, she screamed as he cantered up on his faithful steed. It's fucking July!

And what about Odysseus, the most famous of men to arrive home late, late by at least nineteen years, if not twenty. He didn't

stop for a few drinks. Late! Penelope might have screeched were it not for Greek decorum. I can't use your late, Mr.! Sorry? I can't use your sorry! My pussy dried up while you were gone! And your dog just dropped dead waiting for you!

Ah, the faithful who wait for the late. Knitting and weaving and sewing and quietly unraveling. The oven at 250 degrees drying out the lasagna. The candles on the table down to a millimeter, wax melted on the damask table cloth we got for our wedding!

There are the nonchalant late and the guilty late. There is tardy, as for class, like fifteen minutes, and late, like missing the first hour.

The early bird, etc., but what advantage in nature is gained by late? There are birds who sing into the late evening, hurry up hurry up get to your perch, good night. . . . There are certainly late bloomers in the floral world, and angry expectant bees.

To be or not to be late. A calculated risk. Or unbeknownst? Still invoking in the one who waits primal fear, that the person expected at the event--beloved mother father, lover-- will never arrive. Proust's young Marcel forever suffers the pain of waiting for mama to take leave of the guests in the parlor, ascend the stairs, open the door to his room, sit beside his anxious, trembling body, and kiss him goodnight. But it's too late. He never forgives the torment she causes him when she does arrive, oh so inexcusably late. Later, he seeks it out in every love. He creates a Swann who suffers the wanton duplicity of his mistress Odette, then makes him marry her--long after he ceases to love her, she who made him wait an eternity.

## **Fiction**

If you create a man at the door with a gun and he fires at the person behind the door, he's fulfilled his fictive role.

If he fires into a crowd, he's a different character than the one you had in mind. It's worth investigating this character.

If he kills ten people by firing a gun into a crowd, he may be a character in another story. He may loom too large for the story you had in mind. If he kills fifty, he may require an essay.

If another character declares, It's opened my eyes, I want to keep a gun in the house to protect myself and my family, this character needs a course in reasoning.

If this character needs a course in reasoning, you might send him to France to learn pure and applied logic and new depths of deadpan. Or you might want to open a whole new aspect of the narrative featuring this second character.

If it's tempting to create an interlocutor who asks, And what kind of gun would you keep? And if the answer is an AK 47, this character could well belong in another story. This character doesn't work in fiction, only in America.

If the man fires into a classroom where he assassinates the teacher and nearly all the children, then turns the gun on himself after firing several rounds at the police who enter by the same door, you have the beginning of a Great American Novel.