

# Excerpt from "Buffalo Head Nickels"

by Kerry Ashton

*The house lights fade out as the chiming of bells is heard in the distance. The chiming grows louder as the curtain opens revealing the cast (with the exceptions of the JUDGE and HENRY) standing in a straight line with their backs to the audience. Each machine, or cast member, is frozen from the time the curtain opens. When the curtain is completely open, the chiming continues to gain in volume. Suddenly the sound stops, yet the machines do not move. Stage lights come up on playing area as HENRY enters from DOWNSTAGE LEFT in front of machine line. As HENRY walks toward line, NUMBER 1 swivels about to extend hand mechanically and give speech. HENRY continues down the line as each machine turns in his own particular way to greet him.*

No. 1: I am Number 1. Hello, Henry. *(After giving lines each machine walks to a position upstage, freezes. While this action is taking place the next person begins his speech).*

No. 2: I am Number 2. So nice to meet you, Henry.

No. 3: I am Number 3. How are you, Henry?

No. 4: I am Number 4. Glad you could make it, my boy.

No. 5: I am Number 5. You must be Gladys's boy.

No. 6: I am Number 6. Hope you stick around for the party.

No. 7: I am Number 7. Nice weather we're having this time of year, isn't it?

No. 8: I am Number 8. It's very much a pleasure to meet you, Henry.

No. 9: I am Number 9. It's going to be a fun party isn't it?

MOM: Hello Darling. *(Gives him several unfeeling hugs and kisses) Don't look so depressed. You're embarrassing me. Cheer up! Momma loves you. (Those machines who have spoken are now in position in the background and heads are bowed. HENRY stands at center stage. The remaining four girls turn together and advance toward him.)*

OLD: You're looking much too pale. *(Walks SR, sits)*

YOUNG: After all, you're supposed to be happy. *(Walks SR)*

MIDDLE AGE: *(moving to LEFT of OLD)* And remember, Henry...

GIRL: Smile! *(To SR. Once again the stage is silent. HENRY stands at center stage in disbelief. Quite slowly, he walks upstage and inspects the apparently dead machines. He walks DOWNSTAGE RIGHT, looks at four girls as he touches OLD on the head. Instantly all four faces shoot up.)*

OLD: I am old.

YOUNG: I am young.

M.A.: I am middle-aged, quite conservative.

GIRL: I am also.

OLD: Wouldn't you agree we are all much alike?