

Tech Support

Arthur S. Keyser





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TECH SUPPORT

by

Arthur S. Keyser

CAST

LOUIS SMITH: a woman in her mid-sixties (or, at the discretion of the performing group HENRY SMITH, a man in his mid-sixties)

TECH SUPPORT: a woman who resides in Calcutta, India.
(Tech Support may also be cast as a man)

Place

At stage right, LOIS (or HENRY) is sitting on a chair at a desk, which is in a casual living room at the home where she (or he) and her husband (or his wife), HENRY, live. There are several technical manuals, a phone, a computer, and a printer on the desk. At stage left, TECH SUPPORT is sitting at a large desk. TECH SUPPORT's office is located in Calcutta, India. In TECH SUPPORT's office, in addition to the chair there is an ottoman. There is a large plug-in switchboard and TECH SUPPORT is wearing a hands free telephone headset. TECH SUPPORT has her (or his) feet on the ottoman and is clearly very relaxed. TECH SUPPORT is wearing fitness workout clothes. On TECH SUPPORT's desk, in addition to the switchboard, there are piles of consumer electronic equipment manuals, a pitcher of water and a glass. Throughout the play, TECH SUPPORT never raises her (or his) voice.

Time

Late afternoon.

Note to performing group: This play may be performed or read with both characters as women, both characters as men or by one woman and one man, in which event a woman can play either character and a man can play the other. For convenience in the writing of this script, either Lois or Henry shall be referred to in this script as "Consumer."

At Rise: CONSUMER is speaking on the phone.

CONSUMER: Thanks for the invite. I can always count on hearing from you, when I'm alone for a few days, but I'll have to pass. I have to do something about my new computer and printer. They're both not working and Henry (or Lois) keeps teasing me about my trying to learn how to use the equipment. I want everything to be working when he (or she) gets back. Maybe I can take a rain check until tomorrow. I'll call you.

(CONSUMER hangs up the phone. CONSUMER then picks up a manual from the desk, lifts the phone and places a call. The switchboard, on the opposite side of the stage, begins to ring. TECH SUPPORT plugs a cord into the switchboard. Before pushing a button to connect the call, Tech Support fumbles through the manuals on her (or his) desk. The telephone continues ringing. After seven rings, TECH SUPPORT picks up one of the manuals, pushes a button and answers the call.)

TECH SUPPORT: Welcome to Dell technical support. We apologize for the delay. This is a recorded message. All of our support personnel are busy handling other calls. Please stay on the line and your call will be answered in the order in which calls are received. Your estimated wait time is between thirty seconds and two and one-half hours.

CONSUMER: Two and a half hours!

TECH SUPPORT: I was only kidding.

CONSUMER: What did you say? I thought I was connected to a recorded message.

TECH SUPPORT: You are. You're having a conversation with a recorded message.

CONSUMER: You sound like a live person.

TECH SUPPORT: I'm not. We're just a very innovative company.

CONSUMER: I'm very impressed.

TECH SUPPORT: Thank you for holding. Welcome to Dell Computer support. May I please have your full name and ten-digit telephone number, starting with your area code?

CONSUMER: Did anyone ever tell you that your voice sounds just like a recorded message?

TECH SUPPORT: What are you...a troublemaker? If you're not looking for technical support, why did you call me?

CONSUMER: I'm sorry. My name is Lois Smith (*or Henry Smith*) and my phone number is 321-632-2929.

TECH SUPPORT: Would you like to share your e-mail address with us?

CONSUMER: Why?

TECH SUPPORT: So we can send announcements to you of new generations of computers that you may want to purchase.

CONSUMER: I already have a new computer that doesn't work. That's why I'm calling you.

TECH SUPPORT: Calm down. You'll give yourself an ulcer. May I have your password, please?

CONSUMER: What password? I don't have a password. This is the first time I've ever called about my new computer.

TECH SUPPORT: Oh. That is unfortunate. I can't help you if you don't have a password.

CONSUMER: You mean I've paid for a warranty I can't use?

TECH SUPPORT: Don't get so upset. You can apply for a new password.

CONSUMER: How do I do that?

TECH SUPPORT: On-line. Just use your computer.

CONSUMER: I told you my computer isn't working!

TECH SUPPORT: You sound like you have high blood pressure. Have you spoken to your doctor about it?

CONSUMER: I have low blood pressure!! I don't need a doctor! I need a computer that works. Can you help me without a password?

TECH SUPPORT: Why don't you make one up? Use the name of your first dog.

CONSUMER: I never had a dog. I was always afraid of dogs.

TECH SUPPORT: I understand. I was always afraid of tigers.

CONSUMER: Do you understand I need help?

TECH SUPPORT: Okay. I'll waive the password...but only this time. I would like to give you a case number to use if you have to call about this problem again. Do you have a pencil handy?

CONSUMER: I'm ready.

TECH SUPPORT: Your case number is 6.

CONSUMER: That's it? Just 6?

TECH SUPPORT: That's it. Make sure you write it down so you don't forget it.

CONSUMER: I won't forget it.

TECH SUPPORT: I am required to tell you that this conversation may be recorded for training purposes.

CONSUMER: I've always wondered about that. Are you really recording this conversation?

TECH SUPPORT: Of course not.

CONSUMER: But you just said--

TECH SUPPORT: I said may be recorded...not will be recorded.

CONSUMER: I'm having trouble understanding you. Maybe it's the connection. Where are you?

TECH SUPPORT: I'm in my office.

CONSUMER: That's not what I mean!

TECH SUPPORT: Then why did you ask? Is this a crank call? Are you trying to start a fight with me?

CONSUMER: I'm sorry. I just want help with my new computer.

TECH SUPPORT: I accept your apology. Sometimes our telephone connections here in Calcutta are not very good. So what's your problem?

CONSUMER: My computer does strange things.

TECH SUPPORT: What strange things?

CONSUMER: When I turn it on, the screen has only Chinese writing on it.

(There is a slight pause.)

CONSUMER: *(Cont'd)* Are you still there? Can you help solve my problem?

TECH SUPPORT: Have you thought about taking a course in Chinese?

CONSUMER: Is that all you can suggest? Can't you see that I have a problem?

TECH SUPPORT: How can I see your problem? I'm here in Calcutta. I have to admit it, though. You have a very interesting problem.

CONSUMER: I don't care whether it's interesting or not! How do I get my computer to use a language I understand?!

TECH SUPPORT: Boy...that really is a tough problem.

CONSUMER: Are you listening? Is that all you can say to me? Can you help me solve my problem?

TECH SUPPORT: How am I supposed to know how to solve your problem?

CONSUMER: Isn't this tech support?

TECH SUPPORT: Of course it is. That's what we do. If we could solve problems, we would call our office tech solutions.

CONSUMER: May I please speak to your supervisor?

TECH SUPPORT: Why?

CONSUMER: I'm not satisfied with your services.

TECH SUPPORT: I'm not sure my supervisor is available. May I have her (or him) call you back?

CONSUMER: When will she (or he) be able to talk to me?

TECH SUPPORT: How should I know? I'm too busy providing tech support. I don't have time to worry about what my supervisor does.

CONSUMER: Could you please find out if I can talk to your supervisor now?

TECH SUPPORT: Okay. Please hold for a minute.

(A short pause occurs, during which TECH SUPPORT pushes a button on the switchboard and pours water from the pitcher into the glass. TECH SUPPORT sips some of the water, then puts the glass down, pushes the button on the switchboard again and begins to speak.)

TECH SUPPORT: *(Cont'd)* This is the tech support supervisor. May I have your full name and ten-digit telephone number, beginning with the area code?

CONSUMER: My name is...hey, aren't you the same person I was just talking to? I asked for your supervisor.

TECH SUPPORT: I am my supervisor. You wouldn't believe how much money we save by making me my own supervisor.

CONSUMER: Isn't there anything you can do to help me?

TECH SUPPORT: I'll try.

CONSUMER: Finally! Tell me what I should do?

TECH SUPPORT: I suggest you purchase a new computer.

CONSUMER: *(in a raised, very agitated voice)* Haven't you been listening to me! I have a new computer with a four year extended warranty. I bought it five weeks ago. Only Chinese words are on the screen. I must be crazy! Why am I talking to you?

TECH SUPPORT: You called me. I didn't call you.

CONSUMER: I give up. I'm hanging up on you.

TECH SUPPORT: That was going to be my next suggestion.

(CONSUMER slams the phone down on its base and tries to calm down. She (or he) picks up another manual, lifts the phone and places another call. The phone at the desk of TECH SUPPORT starts to ring. TECH SUPPORT plugs a cord into a different spot on the switchboard, fumbles through the manuals on her (or his) desk, finds what she (or he) is looking for and then, after seven rings, TECH SUPPORT pushes a button on the switchboard.)

TECH SUPPORT: Welcome to HP printer support. May I please have your full name and ten-digit telephone number, beginning with your area code?

CONSUMER: Your voice sounds familiar. Do you have any relatives in Calcutta?

TECH SUPPORT: I have lots of relatives in Calcutta – at least seventy-five cousins, who are living just a short distance from my office. Twenty-seven of them live in one small house. Would you like to hear their names?

CONSUMER: I'm not interested in hearing about your family! I have a problem. My new printer isn't working.

TECH SUPPORT: You shouldn't be so testy. I was trying to answer your question about my relatives. May I please have your full name and ten-digit telephone number, including the area code?

CONSUMER: My name is Lois Smith (*or Henry Smith*) and my phone number is 321-632-2929.

TECH SUPPORT: Would you like to share your e-mail address with us?

CONSUMER: Only if you can read Chinese.

TECH SUPPORT: What?

CONSUMER: Forget it. It was just an inside joke between me and the tech support person at Dell Computer. No. I'm not sharing my e-mail address with anyone.

TECH SUPPORT: May I have your password, please?

CONSUMER: Oh, no! Do you really need that?

TECH SUPPORT: We do it for your protection. Someone else could make believe she's (*or he's*) you.

CONSUMER: Then it's Lassie.

TECH SUPPORT: (*after looking quickly through a notebook*) In checking, we have no record of Lassie as a password. Are you sure you are who you say? Identity theft is a crime and you could be getting into a lot of trouble.

CONSUMER: Identity theft? A crime? I just called to get tech support for my HP printer and now I may be going to jail! I don't have a password! I never had a password!!

TECH SUPPORT: So why did you use a false password? Are you a compulsive liar?

CONSUMER: I never lie. I must have lost my head. Can we talk about my problems with the printer?

TECH SUPPORT: I don't usually forgive so easily, but this time I will. To begin, I want to give you a case number if you have to call about this problem again. You should write it down.

CONSUMER: I'm ready.

TECH SUPPORT: Good. Your case number is 7.

CONSUMER: Somehow I knew you were going to say that. Does that mean you don't get many calls?

TECH SUPPORT: Oh no. We get thousands of calls. Everyone gets the same case number.

CONSUMER: Are you sure you're a technical support representative?

TECH SUPPORT: I must be. That's what it says on the door to my office. Did you write the case number down?

CONSUMER: I don't care about the case number. I just want help to solve my problem. Now, I guess the next step is a warning about this call being recorded.

TECH SUPPORT: What warning? Are you trying to tell me you're recording this call? If you are, I'm hanging up. You shouldn't threaten me. I have lots of cousins and they wouldn't like one of their cousins to be threatened.

CONSUMER: I'm not recording anything! I'm not warning you about anything! I don't want to upset your cousins! I just want my new Dell computer and my HP printer to work.

TECH SUPPORT: You didn't say anything about your Dell computer. If you want help with your Dell computer, I suggest you call Dell. Would you like that phone number?

CONSUMER: No!! I don't want any phone number! I know the Dell number! I just called you for help with my HP printer!

TECH SUPPORT: Don't get so excited. First I have to know the model number of your HP product?

CONSUMER: The warranty card says HP 1818181818181818.

TECH SUPPORT: That number has a nice sound to it. Maybe I should call my favorite cousin and ask him to buy a lottery ticket for me with that number. I could win ten million rupees and quit this job. I'm getting tired of solving problems for crazy people. *(pause)* So, what seems to be your problem?

CONSUMER: When I turn on my printer, it makes weird grinding noises and, when I push the print button, the paper comes out solid pink and has no printing on it.

TECH SUPPORT: That's terrible! I wouldn't want a printer that does that. I would be very upset. Tell me something. Do you wear nail polish? *(or "does your wife wear nail polish?")*

CONSUMER: What does that have to do with my problem?

TECH SUPPORT: If you like the color of the paper, maybe you *(or "maybe your wife")* could match the color of your *(or "her")* nail polish to it.

CONSUMER: That's your answer?

TECH SUPPORT: You called for my advice.

CONSUMER: Have you been listening to anything I've said? My printer isn't working!

TECH SUPPORT: I was trying to be friendly. May I ask you a question?

CONSUMER: Of course.

TECH SUPPORT: Why did you purchase a printer that wasn't working?

CONSUMER: I didn't know it wasn't working! I didn't take it out of the box until I brought it home.

TECH SUPPORT: That should teach you a lesson.

CONSUMER: What lesson?

TECH SUPPORT: Be a more careful shopper. Don't purchase anything that doesn't work.

CONSUMER: I can't believe this. Are you going to help me?

TECH SUPPORT: That's why I'm here. When did you purchase your HP printer?

CONSUMER: Two weeks ago.

TECH SUPPORT: That's not good.

CONSUMER: What's that mean?

TECH SUPPORT: A new model of your printer came out last week.

CONSUMER: A new model? The salesman said the model I bought was the latest model in a new series. He said my model came out just four weeks ago.

TECH SUPPORT: That's true. But that's the consumer electronics industry. Every time you turn around, a new version comes out and your model becomes a pile of old junk.

CONSUMER: Please. Can you help me fix my pile of junk?

TECH SUPPORT: I'm afraid I can't help you. Your model is too new. We haven't received the technical specifications yet.

CONSUMER: But you just told me that my model had been replaced!

TECH SUPPORT: That's the problem. We may never get the technical specifications for your model. They'll probably just skip your model and send us the specifications for the latest model.

CONSUMER: So what do I do?!

TECH SUPPORT: If it was my problem, I would buy a new printer.

CONSUMER: But I just bought a new printer!

TECH SUPPORT: Permit me to correct you. Your printer is not new anymore. It's two weeks old.

CONSUMER: I think I'm losing my mind!

TECH SUPPORT: I'm sorry I can't help you with that. Have you considered calling a psychiatrist?

CONSUMER: Your voice sounds very familiar. Have you ever worked for Dell Computer?

TECH SUPPORT: I work for Dell Computer now. I'm the tech support person.

CONSUMER: And also the supervisor?

TECH SUPPORT: You catch on very fast.

CONSUMER: And you're also the tech support person for HP?

TECH SUPPORT: I'm also my own supervisor for HP.

CONSUMER: Are you tech support for any other company?

(TECH SUPPORT begins to pick up manuals from the piles on her (or his) desk. As she (or he) reads out the company name on each manual, she (or he) tosses that manual on the floor.)

TECH SUPPORT: Let me see? *(pause)* Microsoft, Apple, IBM, Sony, Panasonic, Samsung, Motorola, Toshiba, Texas Instruments--

CONSUMER: How many different companies use you for their tech support?

TECH SUPPORT: When I last counted, it was one hundred and twenty-seven. I'm negotiating with six others.

CONSUMER: And you're the tech support person for all of them?

TECH SUPPORT: You're right on target. Actually, I've been thinking of hiring an assistant. How would you feel about moving to Calcutta?

CONSUMER: If that's a job offer, I don't know anything about technical equipment.

TECH SUPPORT: Not knowing anything is the first requirement. You'd be perfect.

CONSUMER: But I can't move to Calcutta. I have a husband (*or "I have a wife."*)

TECH SUPPORT: You could send home lots of money. Does he (*or she*) shop in stores that accept rupees?

CONSUMER: I don't want to send rupees home.

TECH SUPPORT: Have you thought about getting a divorce? If you moved here, I could ask one of my cousins to marry you.

CONSUMER: I don't want to marry one of your cousins!

TECH SUPPORT: I said I would ask. I can't promise he (*or she*) would say yes. And there would have to be a long courtship--maybe five or ten years. After that, all the cousins would have to give their approval. My family does not accept strangers easily.

CONSUMER: You're making me crazy! I don't want to get a divorce! I'm happily married.

TECH SUPPORT: Did anyone ever tell you that you aren't very flexible?

CONSUMER: I can't believe any of this! I make some phone calls for technical support for my computer and printer and I get no help! Instead I'm accused of identity theft, offered a job in Calcutta and an opportunity to marry one of your cousins. Maybe this is just a bad dream.

TECH SUPPORT: I can't hold the position open too long. I expect to have a lot of interest in the job. It was a pleasure speaking to you.

CONSUMER: It was a nightmare speaking to you.

TECH SUPPORT: If you stay on the line, we would like you to answer a few questions on our automated survey. I would appreciate receiving high marks for my services.

(TECH SUPPORT presses the button on the switchboard and removes her (or his) headset. Holding the phone, CONSUMER just shakes her (or his) head. CONSUMER hangs up the phone, hesitates for moment and then picks it up. CONSUMER places another call.)

CONSUMER: Hi, you're still home! If you still want me to come over...*(pause)*

CONSUMER: *(Cont'd)* I'll be there in fifteen minutes. If you have any gin, I can use a very large dry martini. I might even want two or three.

Lights fade.

THE END