

The Price is Wrong

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**This piece was written back in the '80s; prices should be updated as required.**

MC

Let's have our first item, Danya?

A beautiful woman displays a box of six tarts from a grocery store shelf.

MC

Okay, contestants, we have half a dozen delicious tarts. Now, how much do they cost? Julie? You're first.

JULIE

I'll say \$1.49, Rob.

MC

Okay, let's put Julie down for \$1.49. Next, Shirley?

SHIRLEY

Oh – I think they're on sale this week.

(giggles)

I'm going to say \$1.29.

MC

All right, Shirley says \$1.29. And Tom?

TOM

What kind are they? It's hard to tell from here.

MC

(looks at Tom as if he can't believe he asked that question, then looks at audience, then looks back at Tom)

Butter tarts.

TOM

With or without raisins?

MC

(looks again at Tom, then at audience, then  
off-stage for an answer)

John? With or without raisins? No? Don't know?

Anyone there? Paul? No?

(looks back to Tom)

Tom, we don't know. Can you take a guess anyway –

TOM

Well, I don't know – without knowing that – I'll say \$2.99.

MC

(pauses, looks at audience, then looks  
back at Tom)

You don't do the grocery shopping in your house, do you Tom?

TOM

(not understanding, shakes his head)

Ah, no I don't Rob.

MC

Okay we have Julie with \$1.49, Shirley with \$1.29,  
and Tom, Tom is going with \$2.99. Danya – is anyone's  
price right?

Danya lifts up a card. It says "60¢".

MC

(reading an answer card he has in hand)

But the plastic tray costs 23¢, the cardboard is 31¢,  
and the cellophane wrapping is 5¢, for a total of \$1.16.  
Not including waste disposal costs for the non-biodegradable  
and non-reusable packaging: site establishment, pick-up,  
transport costs. Also not including our land and our oceans,  
since it all ends up in one or the other, causing various  
degradations.

Okay, Danya, what's next?

Danya displays a styrofoam carton of eggs.

MC

Shirley, you start us off with this one.

SHIRLEY

Um – 99¢.

MC

Okay 99¢ for Shirley. Tom?

(then, anticipating him)

We don't know if they're large or extra-large.

TOM

(not catching the joke)

\$1.89.

MC

Okay – Julie?

JULIE

I'll say \$1.29.

MC

(nods, then turns to Danya)

Danya?

Danya lifts up the card in front of the carton. It says “\$1.49, our vision, our health, and some of our food.”

MC

Oh-hoh! Our vision, our health, and our food!

(he reads)

The manufacture of styrofoam produces chlorofluorocarbons which deplete the ozone layer allowing more ultraviolet rays from the sun to get through. This increases the chances of cataracts and eventual blindness, skin cancer, and damage to the body's immune system.

Ultraviolet rays are also harmful to some grain crops and will kill ocean plankton, the base of the marine food chain.

(looks up)

Who knew? Danya, let's see our third item of today's game!

Danya drapes herself over a new car.

MC

All right, we have a brand new car. Looks great, doesn't it? Tom, what's your price?

TOM

What kind of car is it, Rob?

MC

It doesn't really matter, Tom.

TOM

Well – I need to know –

MC

Tom, it's any car.

TOM

I'll say \$13,500.

MC

Fine – \$13,500 for Tom. And Julie?

JULIE

I'll say \$11,500.

MC

Julie says \$11,500. Shirley?

SHIRLEY

Oh I don't know anything about cars, Rob.

(giggles)

I'll say 30,000.

MC

Okay, all three contestants have their prices on the board. Danya – how much does our car cost?

Danya lifts up card in front of car. It says “\$12,000, most of our food, and much of our current climate.”

MC

Ooh – more expensive than we thought!

(he reads answer card)

The carbon dioxide from your exhaust pipe is responsible for much of the greenhouse effect.

Droughts, shifting deserts, and floods will destroy farming as and where we know it, and the consequent global warming will change our current climate.

(he looks up)

Danya, what's next for our contestants?

Danya holds a package of coffee filters at chest level.

MC

Julie, we're back to you. How much does a package of coffee filters cost?

JULIE

\$1.49.

MC

Okay – and Shirley?

SHIRLEY

\$2.49.

MC

\$1.49 for Julie, \$2.49 for Shirley – Tom?

TOM

How many are in the package?

MC looks at audience, doesn't say a word.

TOM (cont'd)

It doesn't matter, right? \$4.99.

MC

\$4.99 it is for Tom. Danya?

Danya lifts up card. It says "\$1.29 and 4 to 45 years of your life."

MC

(reading the card)

Chlorine bleaching to make paper products a pure white produces dioxin, a deadly chemical that causes cancer. The coffee-making process in particular almost guarantees that the dioxin will be transferred from the paper to the body. Hmm.

(looks to Danya)

Danya, what do you have for us next?

Danya displays a pound of ground beef.

MC

Mmm – won't that be great on the barbecue! Shirley?

SHIRLEY

Yes?

MC

(looks at audience)

How much do you think this pound of ground beef costs?

SHIRLEY

Oh. Can I say \$2.49?

MC

I don't know, can you?

SHIRLEY

(giggles)

Okay, \$2.49.

MC

And Tom?

TOM

89¢.

MC

And Julie?

JULIE

\$1.89.

MC

Okay, we have \$2.49, 89¢, and \$1.89. Danya?

Danya holds up card. The fine print is too small to read.

MC

(reads)

This beef is from a cow grazing on cleared tropical rainforest land. It costs \$1.89, plus a cure for cancer and other diseases, since extracts from tropical rainforests provide many of the world's commercial drugs, plus several staple crops, since without access to genetic material from wild relatives, crop breeders are unable to protect against insect attack and fungal invasion, plus half the world's plant and animal species, since they live there, *plus* our current climate, since rainforests are the lungs and air conditioners of the planet –

they consume carbon dioxide and produce oxygen, and they keep the planet cool – and since livestock produce methane which is like carbon dioxide on steroids in terms of its effects on our atmospheric temperature.

(he looks up)

Which makes for a total of what, Danya?

Danya shrugs. Cutely.

MC

(calls off-stage)

John? No? Paul?

(receiving no answer from off-stage, he looks around vaguely)

Anyone have a price on that?