

Chapter 2

It was late in her shift at McDonald's, and Beth was looking forward to going home. She was making a mental note of what groceries she needed to pick up along the way, what the kids had going on for activities after school, and what she was going to make for dinner—maybe a meat loaf tonight. Charlie would like that. He always said he didn't know what it was about her meat loaf, but it was the best he ever tasted. She smiled to herself, glad he liked her cooking. She was so lucky to have him.

An elderly woman stood back from the counter gazing at the menu board behind Beth.

"Can I help you?" Beth offered. No response, but the woman still looked puzzled by the board.

Beth encountered indecisive customer several times an hour. What was so complicated about ordering a burger? She didn't know. Maybe it was the way the board was organized—too much information.

She waited patiently, trying to put herself in the woman's shoes. She probably didn't come into McDonald's very often. Maybe what she was looking for wasn't offered anymore. It could be a number of things, but Beth did wish she would get on with it so she wouldn't be late picking up her kids from school.

Finally, the woman who must have been in her eighties, approached the counter, her eyes still on the menu board. "I'll have...a senior coffee and a chicken sandwich, but not that spicy one. I had that one time and it burned my mouth."

"Is this for here or to go?"

"I'll eat it here, if I may."

"Do you want a meal or just the sandwich?"

"Uh...just the sandwich please."

"Cream?"

"Pardon?"

"Do you want cream for your coffee?"

"Yes."

"How many?"

"How many what, dear?"

"Creams. Do you want one or two packets of cream?"

"Oh, silly me. One will do. Thank you."

"Thank you. That will be \$5.59. Are you paying by credit card or cash?"

"Cash."

Beth took her ten-dollar bill and counted back the change. "You can wait over there, and they'll call your number." Beth thought correctly that it would save time to show her the number on the ticket. *Poor lady*, she thought, *all alone*.