

**BEING PART  
OF A  
SYSTEM**

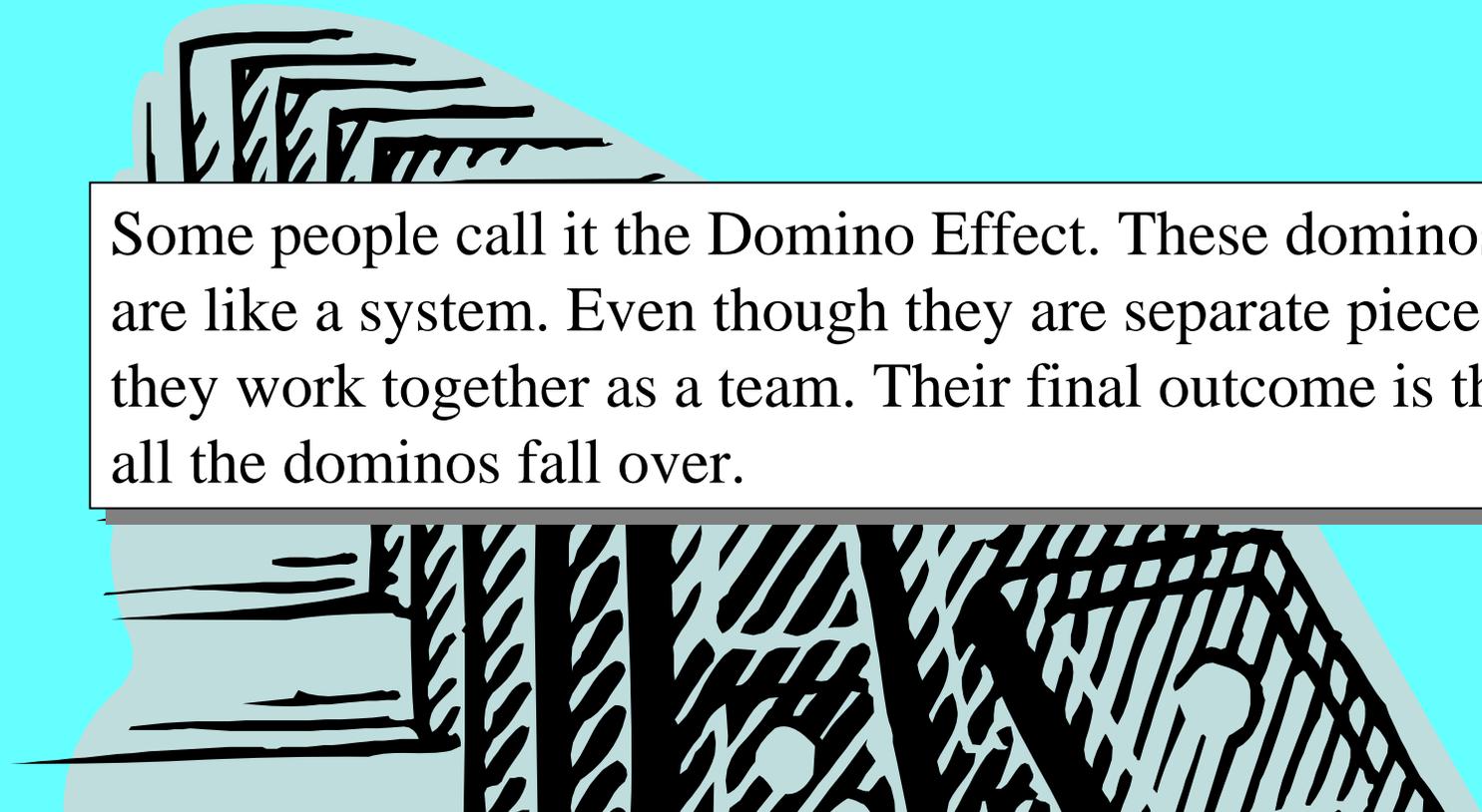
11

**Copyright (C) 2004 by Russell D. Fry**

If you line up a bunch of dominos and push the end one over, they each fall in turn – one after the other.



Write the number 1 on a piece of paper and then write what some people call this effect.



Some people call it the Domino Effect. These dominos are like a system. Even though they are separate pieces, they work together as a team. Their final outcome is that all the dominos fall over.

There are many systems, people that work together for some final outcome - for example:

- A. The school system (principal, teachers, janitors, cooks, clerks, etc)
- B. The court system (judges, defense attorneys, prosecutors, bailiffs, clerks, etc)
- C. The social security system (administrators, clerks, accountants, etc)
- D. The probation system (probation officers, secretaries, supervisors, etc)



Write the number 2 on your piece of paper and then list 10 people that are needed to keep a city bus system going.

Here are some answers that other people often mention: bus drivers, mechanics, secretaries, administrators, accountants, purchasing agents, foreman, janitors and riders.



Did you include riders?



Now, what would happen to the domino effect if one or two dominos were removed from the middle? Write the number 3 on you piece of paper and then write your answer.

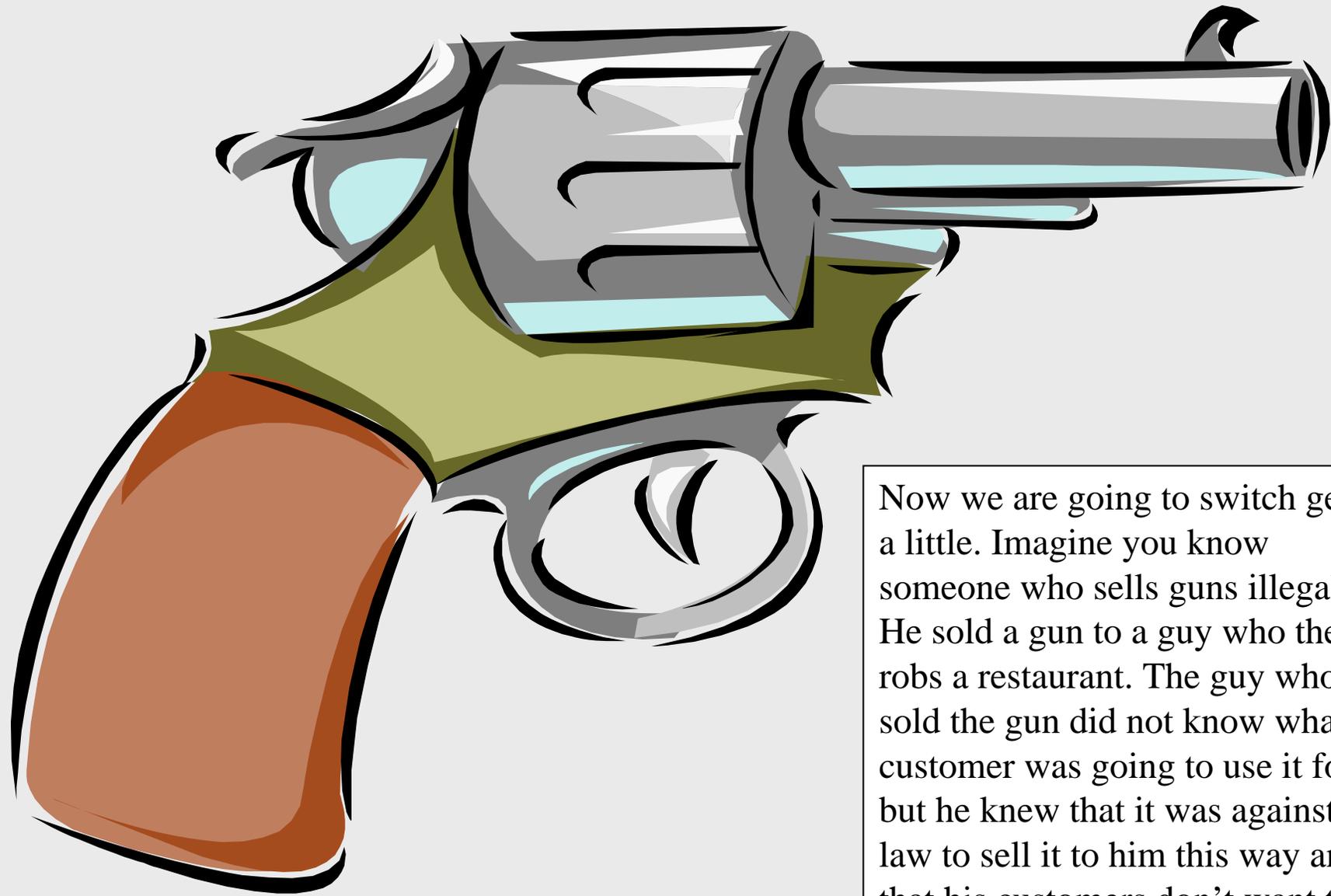
Did you write something to the effect that the dominos would stop in the middle and the system would come to a halt.



Each person in a system does something to keep a system going. If that part of the system is removed, the system eventually breaks down.

Would the bus system eventually come to a halt if there were NO bus drivers, mechanics, secretaries, administrators, accountants, purchasing agents, foreman, or janitors?. How about riders? Would the system eventually come to a halt if there were NO riders? Write the number 4 on your paper and then your thoughts on these questions.





Now we are going to switch gears a little. Imagine you know someone who sells guns illegally. He sold a gun to a guy who then robs a restaurant. The guy who sold the gun did not know what the customer was going to use it for, but he knew that it was against the law to sell it to him this way and that his customers don't want the law to know they have a gun.

Write the number 5 on your paper and then answer these questions:

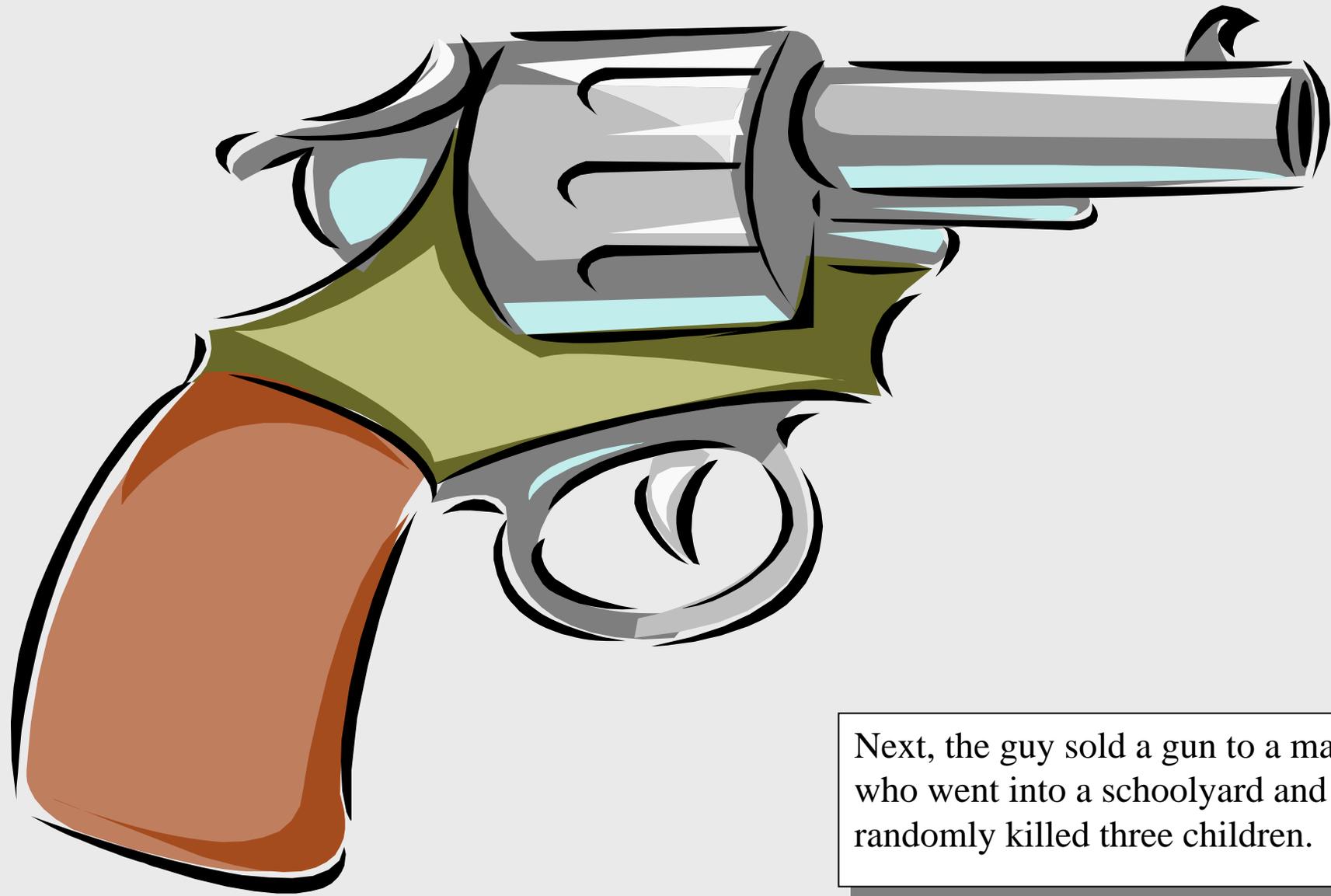
A. Is the guy who sold the gun part of a system? Explain why you think this.

B. How might the guy who sold the gun feel about what happened to the victims of the robbery?

C. How might the people who were robbed at gunpoint feel about the robber?

D. How might the people who were robbed at gunpoint feel about the guy who sold the illegal gun? Do you think that their feelings are justified (the seller didn't actually commit the robbery)?

E. Looking at it from a systems perspective, how does a different customer of illegal guns (who didn't participate in the robbery) contribute to the robbery?



Next, the guy sold a gun to a man who went into a schoolyard and randomly killed three children.

Write the number 6 on your paper and then answer these questions:

A. How might the guy who sold the gun feel about what happened to the victims and their families?

B. How might the parents of the dead children feel about the killer?

C. How might the parents of the dead children feel about the guy who sold the illegal gun? Do you think that their feelings are justified (the seller didn't actually pull the trigger)?

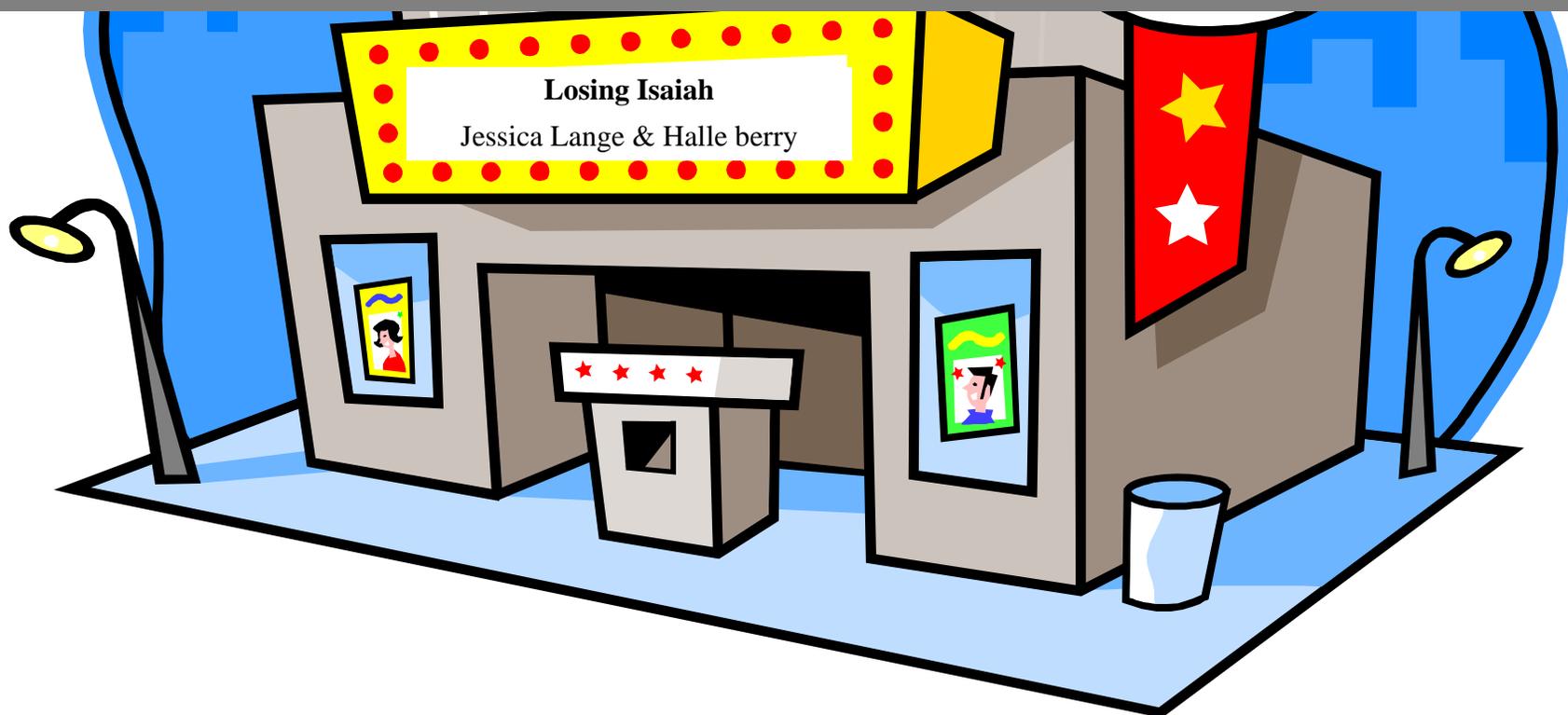
D. How might the guy who sold the illegal gun feel if one of the children killed was his little sister?

E. Looking at it from a systems perspective, how does a different customer of illegal guns (who didn't participate in the shootings) contribute to the shootings?

In the first scene of the movie *Losing Isaiah*, a mother is nursing her little baby. They are in a run down apartment in a run down part of town. The mother feels bad because she is addicted to cocaine and hasn't used for a while. Her baby is fussy, because he was born addicted. She leaves to get a fix and must take her baby with her.



The mother needs to leave her baby some place while she goes get her crack. She finds a cardboard box in a pile of trash. She gently puts Isaiah in the box and pulls his blanket over him. Isaiah is crying and she tries to comfort him as best she can. However, the cravings are strong and she wants to find some crack real bad. She covers the box with a lose piece of cardboard and rushes off to get high.



The next day, Isaiah is still in the box. His mother passed out after getting high. Two garbage collectors, going about their everyday business, put the box that still has Isaiah in it in the rear of the garbage truck. One of the men pulls the lever to compact the trash, when the cover of the box falls off and Isaiah begins to cry. The garbage man looks in horror as he sees the giant metal compactor about to smash the baby. “Stop the Truck. Stop the truck.”



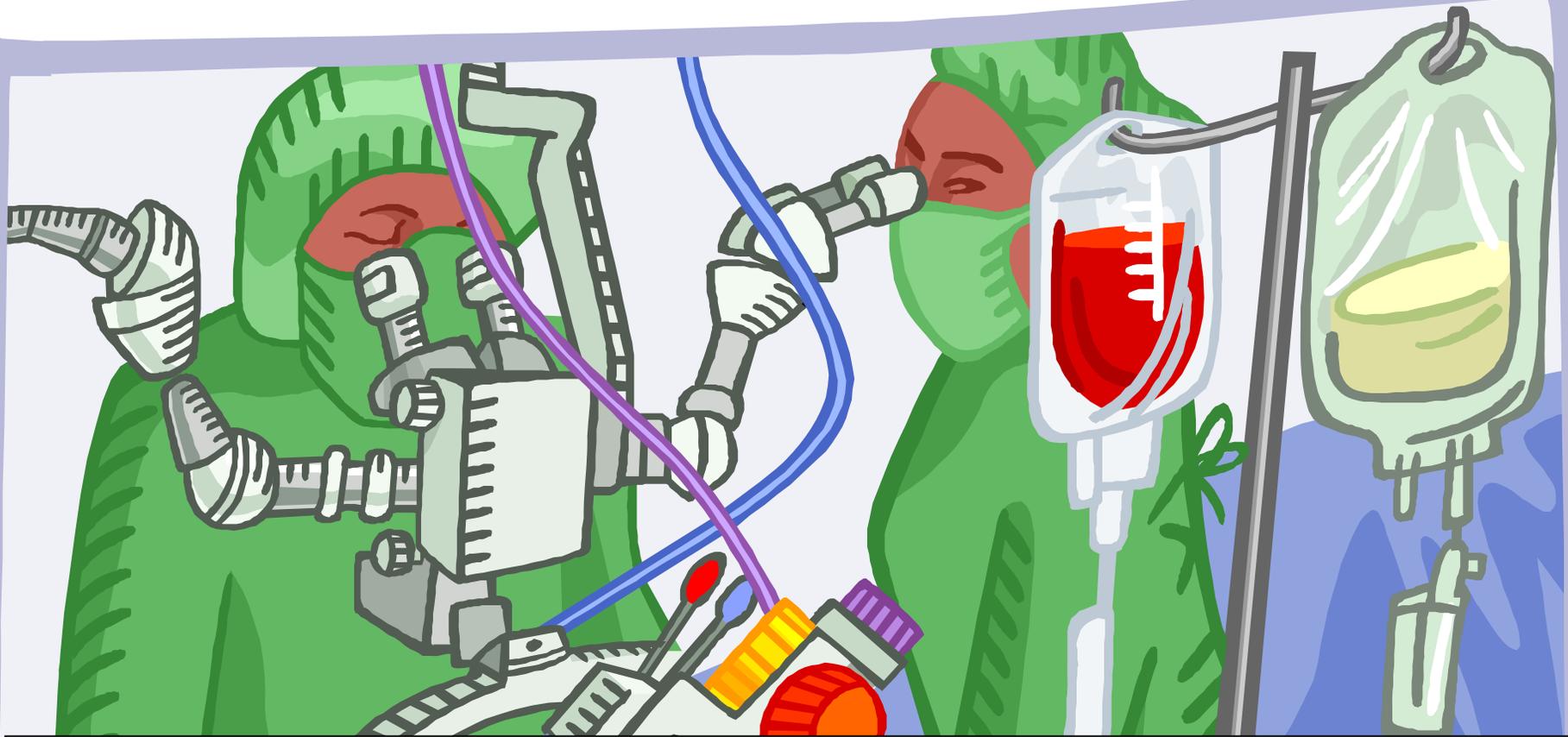
Write the number 7 on your paper and then answer these questions:

A. How do you think the mother felt about leaving her baby in the trash?

B. Do you think she planned to have harm come to her son? What do you believe she was thinking?

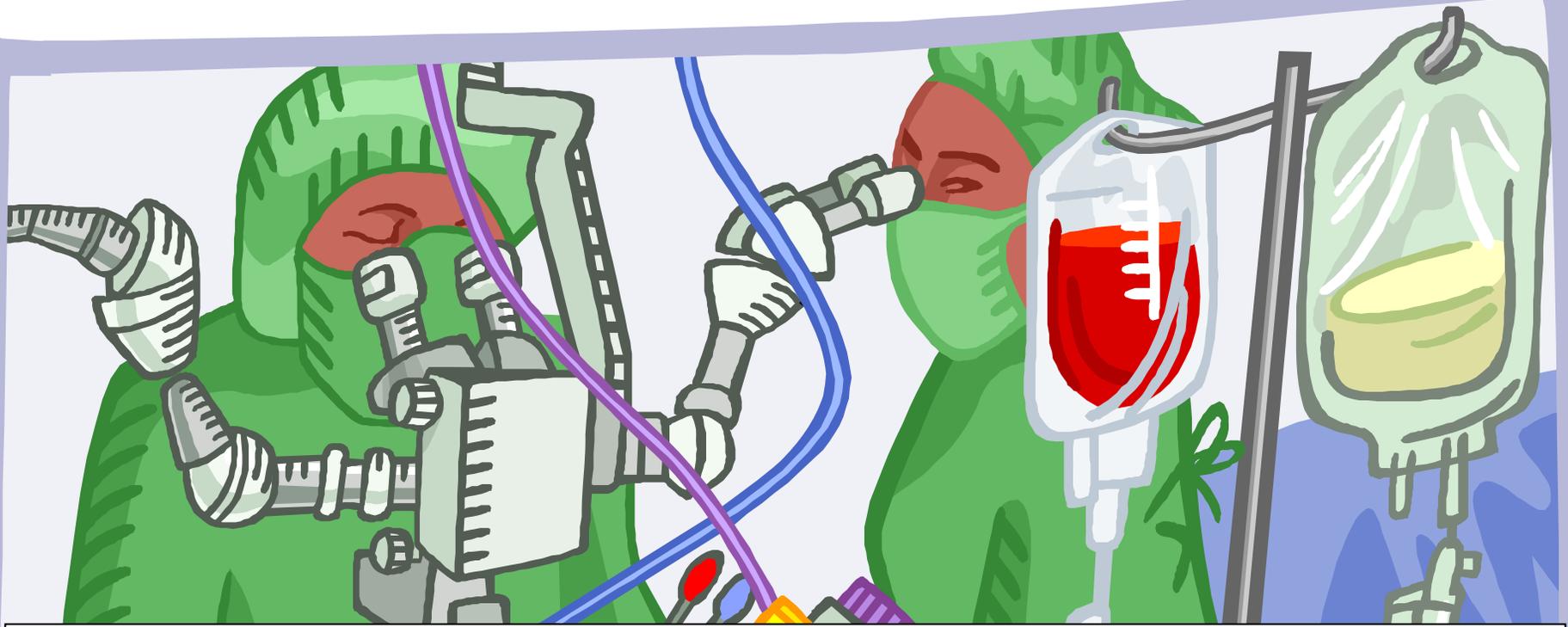
C. Was her son harmed regardless of what she intended?

D. Is the harm done to victims less injurious because the people who harm them did not intent to do so?



Back to the movie Losing Isaiah. The garbage men stop the truck just in time and get Isaiah out. An ambulance rushes him to a hospital. A doctor rushes over and starts to attend to him. He shouts out orders for blood and oxygen.





A social worker comes over. The doctor says that the baby is not breathing on his own and that she should “sign off on him.” That means that the doctor doesn’t believe the baby will live and that he should be taken off of life support and allowed to die. The social workers say, “why don’t we just dump him back in the dumpster.” To which the doctor replies, “All right, go ahead and play god.”

Write the number 8 on your paper and then answer these questions:

A. The male doctor asked the social worker to "sign off" on Isaiah. He was asking her to just let the baby die. What do you think about the doctor?

B. Why do you think he was so callous, so heartless?

C. Do you think he was always so cold hearted?

D. What might he have told himself that made it less hurtful to him that the baby should be allowed to die?

E. How do you think finding a baby in the trash affected the garbage men?

F. How do you think a newspaper story about a baby in the trash affected the readers?

G. Do you think this kind of stuff leads to stricter laws or laws creating more treatment centers?

Write the number 9 on your paper and then answer these questions:

A. Who paid for the ambulance ride?

B. Who paid the doctor bills?

C. Who paid the hospital bills?

Think about this the next time you look at the deductions on your paycheck.



Write the number 10 on your piece of paper and answer whether you think illegal drugs have a system to support them. Explain your answer.

1. Growers

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7. Users

Write the number 11 on your paper and then make a list of all of the people necessary to keep the illegal drug system going.

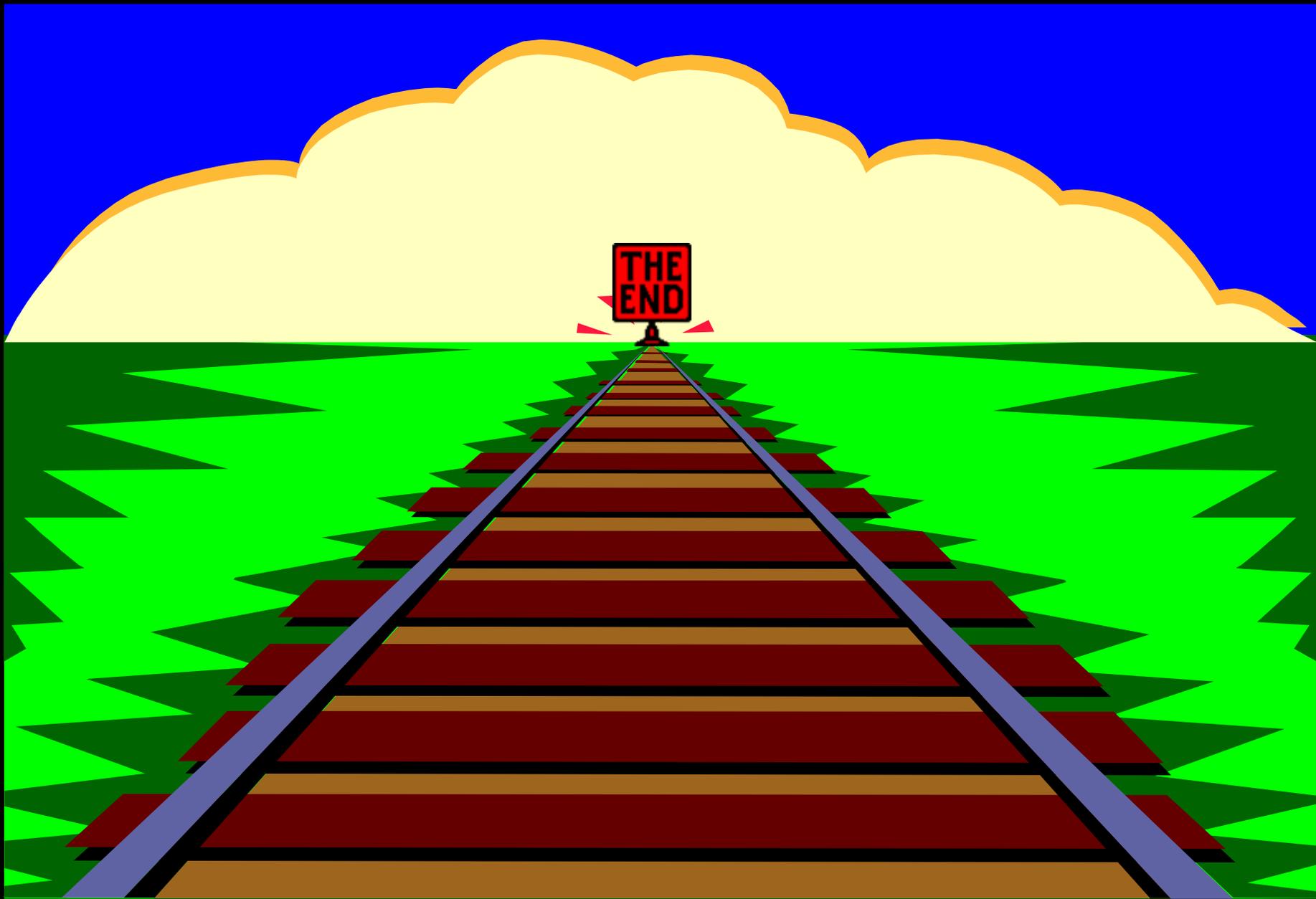
Write the number 12 on your paper and then answer these questions:

A. Looking at it from a systems perspective, how does the person who sold illegal drugs to Isaiah's mother contribute to the Isaiah being put in the trash?

B. Looking at it from a systems perspective, how does another user contribute to the Isaiah being put in the trash?

C. How is a person who is part of a drug system, but denies contributing to the negative outcomes (like Isaiah being put in the trash) similar to the illegal gun dealer or the "sign off" doctor?

What is the disadvantage of becoming a person who contributes to the harming of others and not feel bad about it. Write the number 13 on your paper and then write your thoughts about this.



THE  
END