

Company Culture

by

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Synopsis: *Jo is called in on short notice to a showdown with one of department's more senior executive, Alex, as their boss Taylor manages a crisis in the background. Who will come out on top in this cut-throat corporate world? And more importantly, where are we supposed to sit?*

Cast:

Jo – *Rising Office Star*

Alex – *Middle Manager*

Taylor – *Departmental Head*

Characters are described above without major physical features due to the flexibility of the corporate setting of the play allowing them to all be from any background.

Additionally, characters have been given unisex names and the text is without pronouns (though this should be changed at the production's discretion).

-Start of Play-

Staging: *In the centre of the stage there is a table with 3 chairs; one to **stage left**, one chair at **centre stage** facing the audience and one to **stage right**.*

- CURTAIN UP -

JO *is sitting on the chair at **stage left**.*

ALEX *enters from **stage left**.*

ALEX: Good afternoon Jo.

JO: What's this about Alex?

ALEX: Would you mind sitting over there? [*Points to the chair at **stage right***] That's supposed to be my chair.

JO: Yours? How exactly?

ALEX: Well, er, not mine in terms of ownership of course, but in terms of company culture it's a convention that for, um, meetings of certain importance the more senior executive should, er...

JO *slowly gets up and goes to sit in the chair to **stage right** as **ALEX** takes their place.*

JO: Fine, whatever. [*Settles in the new seat*] Now would you kindly tell me what this is all about?

ALEX: Hang on a moment, it's Wednesday isn't it?

JO: What does that have to do with anything?

ALEX: It's just that, well, it was suggested at our last AGM that every Wednesday we should reverse seating arrangements in meetings to remind us all about the importance of-

JO: Christ Almighty!

ALEX: So if you wouldn't mind...

Both of them get up and switch seats.

ALEX: Apologies for that small, er, delay, but it is after all a very important part of company culture that everyone knows their rightful place.

JO: It's nonsense is what it is.

ALEX: Jo, you've never fully appreciated how we do things here. I feel as though you've always been out of step with-

JO: I appreciate how much time and money it loses this company every second of every day!

JO *indicates the empty chair at **centre stage***

JO: That's probably what's tied Taylor down isn't it? Supposed to be here for this terribly 'important' meeting, but got caught up with some silly nonsense instead.

ALEX: It is, er, regrettable that Taylor was surprised by an unexpected meeting, but I can assure you I fully represent the sentiment and authority of the whole department when I speak with you here today.

JO: Right, that's incredibly reassuring.

ALEX: Are you, um, aware of why you are here today?

JO: Of course. You're giving me a medal for doubling the department's output for the year.

ALEX: Not, er, exactly.

JO: Well then out with it already, we've wasted enough bloody time! What is it?

ALEX: To be frank Jo, your recent performance has been...disturbing to say the least.

JO: I've been doing a great job, I've solved dozens of inefficiencies!

ALEX: Well, be that as it may-

JO: Things have never been better in this department, go ask anyone!

ALEX: Tell me then how you account for the rapid uptick in internal investigations of our-

JO: Because I've been finding and fixing so much broken shit.

ALEX: 'Broken' is a strong word Jo, perhaps a better one would be 'conventional', or-

JO: We both know I've turned this bloody department around, that we're on track to break records.

ALEX: That as may be, but you weren't hired to break records were you? You were supposed to come in, do your job and-

JO: This is because I'm making the rest of you look bad isn't it? You in particular I bet.

ALEX: That is precisely the-, the unhelpfully disruptive attitude that, that- well I regret to tell you this Jo but we are all unanimous in our feeling that you must unfortunately be let-

TAYLOR *rushes in from **stage left**, flustered but cheery, a phone held in their hands*

TAYLOR: Hello, hello, please don't get up! Atrociously late I know, all this silly business with it being a Tuesday, not to mention corporate breathing down my neck. But that's all sorted now!

TAYLOR *sits down in the chair at **centre stage** and glances between the two of them, thinking for a moment, then gives **JO** a bright smile.*

TAYLOR: Great to see you nailed that promotion Jo!

ALEX: Sir?

TAYLOR: [*Turning to ALEX*] Oh Alex, sorry to see you on that side of the table today. You always were so diligent.

ALEX: Wait, you don't think I'm-

TAYLOR:[*Turning to JO*] But as long as we've got rising stars like you the company will thrive. We expect great things Jo!

JO: I-

[SFX] A phone ringing

TAYLOR: Oh crikey, sorry, have to go take this.

TAYLOR *exits stage left*

JO: What did-

ALEX: Taylor thinks you've got my job!

JO: What?

ALEX: The seats, the seats! I got it wrong, it's not Wednesday at all!

JO: So now Taylor thinks I'm in charge of you?

ALEX: Yes, Taylor is extremely loyal to our conventions, lives and breathes them like a- look we have to swap back!

JO: Oh really? Why?

ALEX: Taylor's going to think you're the manager and that I'm the one about to be-, er, that is to say-

JO: Fine by me mate, I'm loving this.

ALEX: Please Jo, you have to-

TAYLOR *re-enters from **stage left** and sits down in the seat at **centre stage***

TAYLOR: Nightmare with corporate right now, you wouldn't believe what they're-, all finally settled now anyway. So, Alex, I believe you're been brought here today for an important matter?

ALEX: Yes, I was just about to lay-, um discuss with Jo here about-

JO: The fact is I've become quite concerned with Alex's performance recently.

TAYLOR: Oh dear me, you have?

ALEX: Sir I-

JO: Alex has proven to be the sort to follow convention blindly.

TAYLOR: Alex, Alex...

ALEX: But I-

JO: The kind of penpusher who fails to deliver on our foundational aims.

ALEX: But all I've ever done is precisely what my job says I should-

TAYLOR: Hush now Alex, we listen to our superiors in this company.

JO: It doesn't matter what your job title is mate, we need people to think not just work!

TAYLOR *nods*

ALEX: I've always done everything I can to support the company culture, to further our values and-

JO: You're always harping on about that nonsense when what really matters is results!

TAYLOR: Bravo.

JO: Making sure our bottom line looks better and better each year! That's what it's all about!

TAYLOR: Exactly, wonderful stuff Jo, you're going straight to the top. [*Turns to ALEX*] Try taking a leaf out of Jo's book some time. While you still can I might add!

ALEX: Sir, please I-

[SFX] A phone ringing

TAYLOR: Oh! Excuse me, have to- [*Brings the phone up to their ear*] Terribly sorry, don't think I can talk right now I'm-, what? No! Special Order Sixty-Six? They can't-, are you sure?

TAYLOR *jumps up from their seat and exits stage left*

ALEX *stares after TAYLOR in horror*

JO: Christ Alex, you look like you've seen a ghost. It's not like I've completely murdered your career. Not yet anyway.

ALEX: This isn't about-, did you hear what said? Special Order Sixty-

JO: Ignore the nonsense from corporate, you've got more pressing worries my friend.

ALEX: Special Order Sixty-Six you idiot, we're both in the same pot now!

JO: Come again?

ALEX: They're going to get him to liquidate the whole department!

JO: What? How do you know?

ALEX: Because I know what all the bloody special orders mean, I know this company!

JO: Christ, so I'm out of the frying pan and into the fire already?

ALEX: Oh God, why today of all-*[Spots the empty chair]* Hang on!

JO: What? We're screwed mate.

ALEX: Not if we-, not if I take that seat!

*There's a brief moment of tension as they stare at each other, then both jump from their seats to race toward the chair at **centre stage**.*

Once they reach it, each grabs a hold and prevents the other from sitting down.

ALEX: What are you doing!

JO: I'm-, well I don't know really. I just saw that you were going to take it.

ALEX: I need this so I can throw Taylor under the bus and save the whole department you moron!

JO: Yeah? Well why don't I just take it, fire the two of you and let this whole bloody place burn?

ALEX: *[Thinking]* Because-, because-, *[Eureka]* Because you don't know how to do the top job, you don't know the company nearly as well as I do! You'd be gone within a week!

JO: Yeah, well I can bloody well do yours.

ALEX: You're more than welcome to! [*Indicates the seat at **stage right***] Just as long as Taylor ends up over there!

JO: Right...but if I let you take this, how do I know you won't just chuck me the second my back is turned?

ALEX: Because as soon as this meeting's over I'm going to pull some of the most self-compromising and devious corporate manoeuvres you'll ever *fucking* see just to keep this department alive.

JO: Jesus, so eager to get your hands dirty?

ALEX: It's the only way! And don't think for a second either of us will come out of this smelling like roses!

JO: You're more than welcome to mate but I'm not half as two-faced as you.

ALEX: Well then just sit down and let me work!

JO: Right, ok, deal.

ALEX: [*Glancing to **stage left***] Quick, quick, Taylor's coming back!

JO hurries back into the seat at **stage left**, **ALEX** settles into the seat at **centre stage** as **TAYLOR** re-enters from **stage left**.

TAYLOR: Terribly sorry about this but I've unfortunately got some awful news for both of you, Corporate's decided that-

ALEX: Take a seat please Taylor.

TAYLOR:I...[*Looking to JO*] I think someone's gotten a little confused here.

JO refuses to meet **TAYLOR's** gaze

ALEX: Forget Jo and sit down Taylor. Now.

TAYLOR *gulps then sits down in the seat at **stage right** as **ALEX** leans in over the table.*

TAYLOR: I'm not sure what you think you're-

ALEX: We know about Order 66 Taylor.

TAYLOR: Oh [*Pauses*] But you know it's not personal Alex, you know that.

ALEX: Well all the same, I'm afraid we've decided that your continued presence would negatively impact departmental morale and so-

TAYLOR: You don't have the mandate for this Alex.

ALEX: [*Thrown*] I have the chair here Taylor.

TAYLOR: But you don't have the room. [*To JO*] Corporate says it's what's best for the bottom line, what's best for the company as a whole. And that's what it's all about, right Jo?

*Silence as both **ALEX** and **TAYLOR** stare at **JO***

*After a moment, **JO** looks up at **TAYLOR***

JO: It's that kind of attitude that tells us you simply aren't compatible with the company culture Taylor. I'm afraid we're going to have to let you go.

- CURTAIN DOWN -

-End of Play-