

# **Company Culture**

**by**

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

## **Cast:**

**Jo** – *Rising Office Star*

**Alex** – *Middle Manager*

**Taylor** – *Departmental Head*

*Characters are described left without major physical features due to the flexibility of the corporate environment of the play allowing them to be from any background and of any origin.*

*Additionally, characters have been given unisex names and the text is without pronouns (though this can 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 versatility and-

**JO:** Christ Almighty!

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

**BOTH** *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, Jo, Jo...I feel that 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 this nonsense loses this company every second of every day, that's what I appreciate!

**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 they're probably 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, incredibly reassuring.

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

**JO:** Of course. You're going to give 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 as it is!

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

**JO:** Excuse me? I've been doing a fantastic 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-

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

**ALEX:** 'Broken' is such a strong word Jo, perhaps a better one would be 'legacy', 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 quietly so the rest of us could-

**JO:** This is because I'm making you pencil-pushers look bad isn't it? You in particular I bet.

**ALEX:** I-, I-, I-, 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, it's always mad on a Tuesday, and today corporate's been breathing down my neck non-stop. 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, to the detriment of his work.

**TAYLOR:** Alex, Alex...

**ALEX:** But I-

**JO:** The kind of mindless drone that fails to deliver on our organisation's foundational goals.

**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:** So true.

**ALEX:** B-but 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 left***] Just as long as Taylor ends up over there! [*Indicates the seat at **stage right***]

**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** *considers for a moment then nods.*

**JO:** Right, ok, deal. But if you cross me I'll-

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

**JO** *hurries back into the seat at **stage left** while ALEX settles into the seat at **centre stage** and 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...[*Surprised then 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-, I-, I have the chair here Taylor and you know that-

**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 narrow-mindedness 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-**