

Disrupting the Box

v. 12

A drama in two acts

by David Datz

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david.datz@gmail.com
626-840-4590

Synopsis

At a large non-profit organization, employees face moral decisions about how to react to the unethical diktats of a new CEO.

Production History

Disrupting the Box has not been produced. It has had several Zoom readings and one staged reading.

Author Biography

David Datz is a writer and actor in Los Angeles. He has written three full-length stage plays and several shorter plays. He has also written three novels, and has self-published a sci-fi novel, *Scalies*, which can be found by searching for “David Datz” at Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Kobo, Smashwords, and the Apple book store.

Cast

Actors can be of any race or ethnicity.

Dana: Male, upper-middle-age, middle manager.

Kaden: Female, upper-middle-age, middle manager.

Lee: Male, on the cusp of old age, the oldest person in the cast.

Marty: Male, late twenties to early thirties.

Gerry: Female, early twenties.

Woodrow: Male, middle-age.

Skylar: Female, middle twenties.

Time

The present.

Settings

Offices, loading docks, bar.

Note: More details about settings, costumes, props, and sounds can be found after the script.

Start of PlayAct IScene 1

Lights up on KADEN's office, stage left. KADEN seated behind it. LEE in the guest chair. They are in the middle of a very hot argument.

LEE

(Angrily, urgently, almost shouting.) I'm telling you this is only the start. This guy will—

KADEN

(Matching his anger.) Lee, calm down.

LEE

—if we don't take steps now—

KADEN

All I'm asking is—

LEE

For me to sell out, along with you.

KADEN

Lee, stop.

LEE

Stop what? Kaden, you—

KADEN

Stop talking before you get in serious trouble.

LEE sits quietly.

KADEN (CONTINUED)

(Trying to cool things down.) Lee, we've known each other how long?

LEE

Since right after Noah's dog died.

KADEN

(Picking up the joke.) His dog died? Wait, I thought there were two, and if one died—

LEE

There was a pair, but this was an extra one. The family pet. They had to put him down after he tried to eat one of the sheep.

KADEN

(Chuckles, reluctantly.) Lee.

LEE

This is why you put up with me.

KADEN

(Fondly.) Besides that you know the data better than anyone.

LEE

And I know what to do with it.

KADEN

(Angry again) Which doesn't make it okay for you to come in here and accuse me of—

LEE

(Joining the fight) You cave, Kaden, every time.

KADEN

Goddamn it, Lee.

LEE

Swearing at your staff, not a good idea.

KADEN

When management makes a demand of me, even if I think it's questionable, if I don't see any other option, I do what they want. If you call that caving—

LEE

Exactly what it is.

KADEN

You know, Lee, despite all these millennia, there are still things you don't know.

LEE

I'm sure. Such as?

KADEN

Such as the times I've shielded you.

LEE

In the future, don't bother.

KADEN

You're welcome.

LEE

I'm not afraid of them.

KADEN

(Looks at him for a moment with boundless exasperation.) Okay. Anything else you want to say?

LEE

(Exasperated to the point of pleading.) I want to know how you'll respond when this new CEO starts making off-the-wall demands which—

KADEN

Lee, please—

LEE

—which could wreck Glo-Zar's reputation as a global charity, or worse, make our lives miserable.

KADEN

You seem to know things about him that I don't.

LEE

I've done a fair amount of reading.

KADEN

You have time for that?

LEE

My own time. At home.

KADEN

My god. I can't fault your dedication but maybe you'd be happier if you didn't do things like that at home.

LEE

You have to be ready, Kaden.

KADEN

I'll be ready to do what's right for the organization.

LEE

Oh, sure you will. But you'll always be able to flex the definition of *right*.

KADEN

(Dismissive.) Okay, Lee. You wanted to warn me. Consider me warned. Thank you.

LEE

(Urgently.) You have to understand what he's capable of, Kaden, I—

KADEN

(Finally done.) Okay, Lee. I get it. I get the message. It's loud and clear.

LEE

I don't think you—

KADEN rises from her chair.

KADEN

I believe you have work to do.

LEE

(Giving up, but just for now.) Okay. Whatever.

LEE starts to leave.

KADEN

And shut the door behind you, please.

LEE exits.

KADEN sits back down and looks out into space.

Blackout.

Scene 2

Lights up on DANA's office. He is seated behind his desk. GERRY and MARTY are in guest chairs. They are in the midst of an amicable discussion.

DANA

I like it.

GERRY

Marty helped.

MARTY

Not really. I just mentored, whatever that means.

GERRY

(To DANA to tease MARTY. They clearly like each other a lot.) He did it nicely. He's not so bad, really, once you get to know him.

DANA

But you need to think inside the box.

MARTY laughs.

GERRY

(Mystified.) I need to . . .

DANA

Everybody says think outside the box. But sometimes you need to think inside the box.

GERRY

Haven't I?

MARTY

She has a point, boss.

GERRY

(Pleading a little.) If you thought it was a really bad idea you would say so, right?

MARTY

He'd get out his bright red bullshit stamp. The digital one, of course.

DANA

The one I used on that exercise in ass-kissing you handed me right after you started. But it wasn't just the ass-kissing that earned the bullshit stamp.

MARTY

I know.

DANA

(Smiling.) The real problem was, it was very poor quality ass-kissing.

MARTY

I know.

GERRY

(To MARTY) So you re-wrote it, whatever it was?

MARTY

I trashed it and started over.

DANA

It's now the third section of our official guidance.

GERRY

(Sincerely.) Wow. I'm impressed.

MARTIN

(Modestly.) It's not that big a deal.

GERRY

But Dana, are you saying my proposal is . . . ?

DANA

No, it's not bullshit. See, there's another element in play here.

GERRY

And that is?

DANA

(To MARTY.) Tell her.

MARTY

The secret of comedy.

GERRY

(Takes a moment to get it.) So you're saying the timing is off?

DANA

Yeah, but unlike in comedy, it's out of our control.

MARTY

You're talking about Bob.

DANA

Yeah. Him.

GERRY

But the memo said we should go on doing our business.

DANA

Yep. That's what it said.

MARTY

But it's not what it meant.

DANA

Nope.

GERRY

What do you think will happen?

DANA

He's admired as a disrupter.

MARTY

But will the disruption be good?

DANA

I always try to be positive.

GERRY

So where does that leave my proposal?

DANA

In a holding pattern. It's just not a good time to send it upstairs.

GERRY

But it would help us a lot, right now.

MARTY

She's right again, boss.

GERRY

(Liking him, teasing.) Why, thank you, Marty. Such a good mentor.

DANA

Nothing to say you couldn't start doing parts of it on your own.

GERRY

You wouldn't object?

DANA

How would I even know?

GERRY

(Concerned.) Is that how it's going to be here?

DANA

(Smiles.) You young people. You worry too much.

Blackout.

Scene 3

Lights up on KADEN's office. SKYLAR is in the guest chair.

SKYLAR

Bob gave me an assignment.

KADEN

Oh?

SKYLAR

Yes. He emailed me. And then he phoned.

KADEN

(Somewhat surprised.) He phoned?

SKYLAR

Yes. I forwarded you the email. It was the fourth item in it.

KADEN

The fourth. Right. He's fond of numbering his paragraphs, isn't he. I picture him writing a novel that way.

SKYLAR

Is he?

KADEN

Writing a novel? No. Not that I know of. That was a joke.

SKYLAR

You never know.

KADEN

So, what did he say on the phone?

SKYLAR

That it was really important. That he thought I'm the best person to lead the way on it, and that he would see that I get the resources I need.

KADEN

And did he say what resources he had in mind?

SKYLAR

Well, he mentioned Lee as an example.

KADEN

Well, shit. Did he mention me?

SKYLAR

No.

KADEN

Did you?

SKYLAR

No, I . . .

KADEN

Like for instance, to say that I'm your boss and you would have to talk to me about additional assignments?

SKYLAR

No. I'm sorry. Maybe I should have.

KADEN

No. *I'm* sorry. Of course you didn't. When the CEO calls, it's hard to keep your mind straight. What else?

SKYLAR

He told me to write a project plan.

KADEN

Right. For which he gave you the particulars.

SKYLAR

He sketched them out, yes.

KADEN

Wow. You should be thrilled.

SKYLAR

It does seem important.

KADEN

Did he give you a time frame?

SKYLAR

He wants it in two weeks.

KADEN

(Surprised.) Two weeks? Shit howdy. Did you tell him you already have a deadline in that same two weeks?

SKYLAR

I tried to, but—

KADEN

But he said don't worry about that. He told you this assignment he's giving you is more important.

SKYLAR

That's what he said, yes.

KADEN

Of course that's what he said. Obviously he wanted you to bypass me, didn't he.

SKYLAR

He didn't say that, he just said something—

KADEN

Let me guess. He said, you should always remember that at Glo-Zar, each employee has to set his or her own priorities in line with the philosophy. Right?

SKYLAR

How did you—

KADEN

Just guessing.

SKYLAR

I came to tell you I might be late finishing my next assignment.

KADEN

Right. We'll have to stretch that one. I don't want you to work sixteen-hour days trying to do both.

SKYLAR

But I feel guilty about it.

KADEN

I know. That's what makes a good worker. Guilt. A great motivator, right behind fear.

SKYLAR

Kaden, I—

KADEN

It's okay, Skylar. I'll reassign your immediate stuff.

SKYLAR

Thank you.

KADEN

Skylar, when did this start? Was it at that last conference?

SKYLAR

Well . . .

KADEN

The one where Bob took you to lunch.

SKYLAR

I don't know.

KADEN

You talked.

SKYLAR

We did.

KADEN

(Taking a moment.) You'd better get to that assignment.

SKYLAR

Thank you.

SKYLAR exits. KADEN picks up phone and pushes a button.

Scene 4

Lights up on DANA, in his office, stage right, and KADEN in hers, stage left. They are conversing on office phones without video. They talk like the old friends that they are.

DANA

So, you've got Lee telling you that Bob is a jerk, and that selfsame jerk has reached over your head and grabbed one of your staff, and that makes you nervous.

KADEN

You might say that.

DANA

Okay, but to calm you, I would also say that Lee is an old crank. A sort of likeable old crank, but an old crank nonetheless.

KADEN

Believe me, I know.

DANA

And second, CEOs ignore the org chart all the time.

KADEN

I suppose.

DANA

You're not convinced.

KADEN

I've gone from nervous to uneasy.

DANA

That's an improvement, no? You still worried that some of your relatives might actually have to work?

KADEN

(Changing the subject) What about Skylar?

DANA

Oh, come on, Kaden. You can't be jealous of the kid. If she can handle this assignment and doesn't get a big head, she'll be an asset to you. If she can't, you'll be as nice and supportive as you are to all your youngsters.

KADEN

Remember when we were like that?

DANA

I don't think we were ever like that, exactly.

KADEN

(A touch sentimental.) I mean young.

DANA

(Picking up the nostalgia.) Oh, yeah. And eager.

KADEN

And we had fun together.

DANA

That, we did.

KADEN

Helping Glo-Zar save the world.

DANA

Still are.

KADEN

(Back to the present.) Okay. I get it. Nothing new here, nothing to worry about.

DANA

Exactly.

KADEN
But I still worry.

DANA
Yeah. Me too.

KADEN
You? You just told me—

DANA
I know. But he's new. We don't know what he'll do. It's natural to worry.

KADEN
Shit. You're human after all.

DANA
Please don't tell my staff.

KADEN
Next time we're in the same place, we should get dinner.

DANA
We should. Bye.

They both hang up their phones. Lights on KADEN darken, stay up on DANA.

Blackout.

Scene 5

Stage right, MARTY is alone on the loading dock. Stage left, LEE is on his own loading dock. They're talking on cell phones. At lights up, we hear traffic noises to indicate the location. The noises fade as the dialog starts.

LEE
Why couldn't we talk from our cubicles?

MARTY
You don't care who hears?

LEE
No. Why should I?

MARTY
Okay, you don't care, but would you just—

LEE

You don't understand that report.

MARTY

Well, no.

LEE

I work with two kinds of data.

MARTY

Lee, just tell me—

LEE

The first kind comes from the database. The second comes from the top floor of your building.

MARTY

What—

LEE

The first kind of data does not lie. You can manipulate it to tell whatever story you want to tell, but it's always there so the reader can get to the truth. The second kind of data *can* lie. It doesn't have to, but it can.

MARTY

Lee, could you spare me—

LEE

If you weren't a young numbskull, you'd see it already. Why do you think it's two pages instead of the usual one?

MARTY

I've tried, but I can't—

LEE

And the order of the pages is the reverse of what it should be. Page one has results from the second kind of data. Page two has the first.

MARTY

(As the light dawns.) Ah.

LEE

Took you long enough.

MARTY

But tomorrow I have the donor rep meeting, and those folks already have the report. I don't see how I can explain it.

LEE

Can't help you there.

MARTY

Have you ever done anything like this before?

LEE

Usually I ignore the second data type. Or put it in footnotes in a font too small to read, in case anybody wants to. But this time my boss forced me. The two pages are a compromise.

MARTY

I know. Kaden's tough.

LEE

Not tough enough. Good luck, my friend.

Blackout.

Scene 6

At lights up, MARTY stands downstage center, facing the theatre audience. Though he's addressing the theatre audience, he is actually talking to his own audience of donor representatives. He holds a remote control. Except for an isolation light on him, the stage is dim. He is addressing his group of donor representatives, as he has done routinely in the past, but this time he is nervous.

Seated behind MARTY, at the conference table, is DANA.

At her desk stage left is KADEN, in her own light, watching the proceedings on her laptop. At appropriate times, she gestures at her screen, shakes her head, or otherwise reacts to what she sees.

MARTY

So, I'll just summarize before taking questions. Glo-Zar's new strategy is, uh, based on realistic, detailed policies, which, in turn, are based on, uh, careful study of activities on the ground at our project locations. At first glance, it may appear to contradict long-standing practices, but, uh, I can assure you that we will continue to do the work that your generosity has long funded and of which you—and we—are so justifiably proud. Questions, please?

MARTY's question/answer session is, for the theatre audience, like a phone conversation in which the theatre audience does not hear the questions, but only his responses.

He scans the audience looking for a raised hand (which the theatre audience does not see), finds one, points to it, and listens to the question. With each question he grows more nervous.

Yes, the new report is confusing, but as I've said—

Yes, I know it seems that way, but—

I'll get clarification on that, I promise

MARTY again scans the audience and finds a hand, and listens.

Yes, I know Bob said that, but—

Yes, he's blunt, that's his style.

That's true, but we're aware of the risk and—

Oh, no, our operations folks would never let that happen.

Yeah, I know it looks that way but—

I can see why you might be upset—

It does seem like a contradiction, but I can assure you—

Oh, absolutely. I'll get back to you, I—

Yes, it was working well, but I think we can agree that it could be—

I understand your concern. I do.

MARTY hears another question shouted from across the room.

Always, Glo-Zar's first concern is our clients.

(Straining to smile) As we always say, your donations save lives.

Yet another shouted question.

Oh, I know you have many competing demands on your generosity.

Well, that's a very good question, but I'm afraid I'll have to get back to you on—

Before the week is out. I promise.

MARTY scans the room, hears no more questions, sees no more hands.

So, I guess that's all. As always, thank you for coming, thanks for your participation, and most of all, thanks for your generosity. Oh, and on your way out please take some coffee, a pastry, some fruit.

He stands, forcing a smile, watching the people leave. Occasionally waves to someone.

KADEN reacts to what she's seen and taps on her laptop as the lights dim out on her.

After another moment, MARTY's audience is gone, and the stage lighting comes on full.

MARTY holds his head in both hands.

MARTY

Shit. Shit shit shit.

DANA rises and comes downstage to MARTY. He puts a hand on MARTY's shoulder. MARTY flinches and moves away.

DANA

Hey, Marty, it's okay.

MARTY

I felt like an idiot.

DANA

You handled it.

MARTY

I was throwing bullshit. Where's your stamp?

DANA

You didn't—

MARTY

(Exploding) I did. That's exactly what I did. I've always prided myself on doing the opposite. Their questions were all spot on. They were right to worry. I would've felt the same way.

DANA

Take a breath.

MARTY

(Even more worked up.) What's wrong with that guy?

DANA

Who?

MARTY

Who? The one who keeps undercutting us in public. The one who makes uninformed stupid comments that upset everybody, including the people who fund us. The one who makes me defend reports with bullshit data. Is this what you meant by disruption? These people will never trust me again.

DANA

Calm down, Marty. You'll do your research and send out your emails and they'll be fine.

MARTY

My research? How do I research bullshit?

DANA

Trust me. You're the man. The best at this. But I have another meeting to go to. We'll talk later, okay?

MARTY

Okay. Thanks.

DANA

You're welcome, always.

DANA exits.

MARTY swears silently.

Blackout.

Scene 7

Lights up on SKYLAR, downstage left. She is dressed much more strikingly than previously. Like MARTY before, she is addressing her own audience, which, for her, is the managers. Unlike MARTY, she does not hold a remote. Seated behind her, at the conference table, are KADEN and LEE. KADEN has papers in front of her. LEE has a laptop.

Stage right, in his own light, is DANA, at his desk, watching and reacting to the proceedings on his laptop.

As SKYLAR speaks she references slides that the theatre audience cannot see.

SKYLAR

(Crisply.) So, Bob asked me to make this presentation to allay your worries, and I think this slide sums up our response. I see there are some hands raised, but I'll ask you again to hold your questions till the end. Next slide, Lee.

SKYLAR waits a second as LEE taps his laptop and the next slide appears.

Thank you. So, this is the data that was presented at the last donor rep meeting. *(She smiles.)* That famous data that was supposed to be so *(mock sinister)* controversial. So contradictory.

LEE

(Muttering just loudly enough to be heard.) Just plain wrong.

SKYLAR turns upstage.

SKYLAR

Excuse me?

LEE

Nothing.

SKYLAR

I thought I heard you say something.

LEE

You should show the other data.

SKYLAR

The other data? What other data would that be?

LEE

I think you know.

SKYLAR

(Deadly.) Next slide, please, Lee? *(To audience.)* So. Sorry about that. *(Gesturing at the unseen slide.)* Here, actually, is the data that Lee was referring to, with just a little simple arithmetic showing how there is absolutely no contradiction. Okay? Next slide please.

SKYLAR waits a second but LEE does not move and the next slide does not appear.

Excuse me. Lee, next slide, please?

SKYLAR again waits while LEE taps his laptop and the next slide appears.

Thank you, Lee. *(Takes a breath. She is cheerful and sarcastic at the same time.)* I saved this one for last. Well. There have been a lot of rumors lately, haven't there, but these bullet points should put them all to rest. First, operations will continue, as always, with the clients given high priority. Second, however, we have to acknowledge that there are other factors that in the past we've not paid enough attention to. Third, any idea that there is some dastardly plot to redirect resources has no basis in reality. Bob wants you to continue doing your jobs to keep the ship going, while he steers it. Questions? Yes, here in front.

Like MARTY, she takes time to hear each question, which the theatre audience does not hear.

He said what?

No, really, you're making that up.

No, our CEO did not say that.

Another false rumor, I'm afraid. We should all pay less attention to them. *(She points to somewhere in the audience.)* Yes?

Well, the idea that there are factors other than our clients, things that require focus, is hardly new. He's just making it explicit.

On the contrary, I call it honesty.

You know, if you're going to talk like that I'll ignore you. Next? *(She scans the audience.)* If you have a more civil question.

Any question is fine, I just—

(Like a school teacher addressing sixth graders) Could you adjust your tone?

Is that a question or a comment?

If you're worried about our clients you can stop. Help will go where it's needed, but in the right way, as has *not* always been the case in the past.

(Scans the audience and points.) Yes?

You're wrong about that. *(Turns upstage to KADEN.)* Kaden, you have information on this point, don't you?

KADEN

(Startled.) Excuse me?

SKYLAR

This issue. I think you have specific information about it.

KADEN

Well, I—

SKYLAR

You would back up Bob on this, right?

KADEN

Of course, but—

SKYLAR

(Dismissively.) Thank you, Kaden. *(Looks out at the audience and sees many hands.)* Well, I see there are more questions, but I think we're out of time here. Please email any other concerns. Thank you.

DANA closes his laptop and lights on him go out.

SKYLAR watches the audience for a moment as they file out. Seeing that they are gone, she turns upstage and circles around KADEN and LEE and addresses them from behind them.

SKYLAR

(Sarcastic.) Kaden, a little wool-gathering there?

KADEN

I wasn't expecting—

SKYLAR

Wool-gathering, like I said. And Lee?

LEE

What was that, what did you call it? Simple arithmetic?

SKYLAR

You saw it on the slide.

LEE

Oh, yes, and it was just as nonsensical up there as it was when you tried to explain it before.

SKYLAR

Lee.

LEE

And I'm pretty sure Bob did say those things.

SKYLAR

You know, Lee, I think for your own good you should temper what you do and say. Okay?

SKYLAR waits a moment for a response, and hearing none, she exits upstage.

KADEN and LEE each take in a breath and let it out, relieving the tension after SKYLAR is gone.

Blackout.

Scene 8

Lights up on DANA, standing in his office, lost in thought, maybe staring out his window (toward the audience). GERRY approaches his office door, clears her throat.

GERRY

Dana? You have a minute?

DANA

(Startled, looks toward her.) Gerry. Of course, come in.

GERRY enters, DANA gestures towards his guest chairs, but she does not sit.

GERRY

I was wondering—

DANA

If it's about your proposal again—

GERRY

No, it's not—

DANA

—it's really not a good time, Gerry.

GERRY

Right. The secret of comedy.

DANA

(Distracted.) What?

GERRY

Nothing. It's just a couple things.

DANA

Okay.

GERRY

I worry about Marty.

DANA

What's new?

GERRY

He's, I don't know, he seems unsure, hanging, like he's—

DANA

Gerry, Marty's a big boy. He'll take care of himself. But I think that's not the main reason you're here.

GERRY

You're right. *(She takes a moment.)* I got an email from somebody named Woodrow. He said he spoke for the CEO.

DANA

(Suddenly alert.) Woodrow. What did he want?

GERRY
For me to change a report.

DANA
Which report?

GERRY
Global malnutrition. The monthly one.

DANA
What changes?

GERRY
He wanted it to be more optimistic.

DANA
How?

GERRY
He wanted me to pull section B.

DANA
Current conditions?

GERRY
Yes. He told me to delete it completely.

DANA
Why?

GERRY
He didn't say. I asked him, in email, and he said that wasn't my business.

DANA
So what did you do?

GERRY
While I was thinking about it, he sent me his own version, and said I should put my name on it and send it out.

DANA
I want to see it.

GERRY
He told me no more reviews, just send it out. And he mentioned you, in particular.

DANA
Me?

GERRY

He said to avoid you.

DANA

(Ignoring that last.) What else is changed?

GERRY

The tables and the graphs we usually have are there, mostly, but I couldn't reconcile them with last month.

DANA walks downstage, looking out his window. He says nothing.

GERRY (CONTINUED)

So, what should I do?

DANA

(Distracted.) Do? I don't know. Do as Woodrow says.

GERRY

Who is he?

DANA

Bob brought him in. Don't worry about it.

GERRY

But—

DANA

Anything else?

GERRY

(Hesitating.) My proposal.

DANA

Gerry, I told you—

GERRY

I know. It's just that Woodrow asked about it.

DANA

Woodrow? How did he know?

GERRY

I'm sorry. I was feeling frustrated so I sent it to one of the VPs.

DANA

You sent it—

GERRY

Dana, I'm sorry. I don't know what I was thinking, I was proud of it and I wanted it to be seen and—

DANA

Which one?

GERRY

Which what?

DANA

(Suddenly upset.) Damn it, Gerry, which VP?

GERRY

It was—

DANA

(Getting control.) Never mind. So, whichever VP it was, shared it with Woodrow.

GERRY

Evidently.

DANA

What did he say?

GERRY

The VP didn't—

DANA

Woodrow.

GERRY

He said it was promising. He said he'd be talking to me about it soon. Dana, I'm so sorry.

DANA

So he liked it.

GERRY

Yes. But then he sent the email about the report. I've kind of screwed up, haven't I?

DANA

(Takes a beat to think.) You didn't do anything wrong, really. It's just that sometimes it's better . . . *(Stops himself, takes another beat.)* He outranks me, so you should cooperate with him. Just please keep me informed.

I'm really sorry. GERRY

Stop apologizing. DANA

(Cautious.) Okay. What about the report? GERRY

Doesn't matter. You can't change it back. DANA

But it's wrong. GERRY

It's done, Gerry. Just move on. DANA

But it's not— GERRY

That's all, Gerry. DANA

(Blurting.) Why do I feel like the ground's sinking? GERRY

DANA says nothing. GERRY waits a moment, then exits.

Blackout.

Scene 9

Lights up on a conference room. Seated on one side of the table are DANA, nearest the upstage end, or head. Next to him are MARTY, and GERRY.

GERRY
(To DANA.) Do you know what this is about?

DANA
Nope.

MARTY
(Joking) Always with the questions, Gerry.

GERRY
(Joking back) If you weren't so secretive.

MARTY

I am not—

MARTY is interrupted by the entrance of WOODROW and his booming cheerful greeting.

WOODROW

(Smiling broadly as he sits at the head (upstage end) of the table.) Hello, everyone. I'm Woodrow. Maybe you've heard of me, maybe not, doesn't matter. I'm not famous, unless you count my spaghetti sauce. The key is extra oregano. Know why? It makes up for lost thyme.

WOODROW waits for a laugh. DANA, MARTY, and GERRY smile, but don't laugh.

WOODROW (CONTINUED)

Pretty bad, huh? *(Looking at DANA)* You're the oldest, so you must be Dana.

DANA

I—

WOODROW

So, Dana, why did you call this meeting?

DANA

I—

WOODROW

A joke, a joke, relax, no worries. And you, *(to GERRY)* I'm guessing you're Marty?

GERRY

Actually, I'm—

WOODROW

Gerry. Easy to mix up Gerry and Marty, huh? I mean the names are switchable. Actually, they all are, aren't they? *(To Gerry)* You could have been Dana, right?

GERRY shrugs.

WOODROW (CONTINUED)

You could have deliberately mixed your names up, just to confuse me. That would have been fun, huh?

A brief silence as the others don't know what to say.

DANA

Woodrow, we do—

WOODROW

You have things to do, I know. Sorry, I'll get right to it. (*Taking a moment to appraise GERRY.*) You sure you're Gerry? (*Indicating Gerry and Marty.*) You aren't playing a joke on me, are you?

DANA

We wouldn't—

WOODROW

And the reason I'm maybe slightly suspicious is that proposal. (*Again looking Gerry over.*) It seems maybe a little too good to have come from someone so young, and, uh—

MARTY

It's hers, Woodrow. She's Gerry and she wrote the proposal.

WOODROW

(*Chuckling.*) Okay. Guys my age have, what? Expectations? Biases? Sexism, ageism, et cetera. Right, Dana? We need to get into the twenty-first century, I guess. So congratulations, Gerry. Good work. I hope your boss appreciates you.

GERRY

Oh, Dana is—

WOODROW

Because I got the feeling that whoever wrote that proposal was going over him.

GERRY

(*Embarrassed*) Well—

WOODROW

Don't misunderstand. It's okay that you went over him. Sometimes that's necessary, right Dana?

DANA

Sometimes.

WOODROW

Of course. And, Gerry, that report we had that little go-round about. That was yours too, right?

GERRY

It's one of my regular assignments.

WOODROW

Right. But I think maybe in the future you should leave section B to others. Okay?

GERRY

Well, usually the data comes directly from our program and I just—

WOODROW

(Dismissive.) Oh, the program. Computers, right? We all secretly hate them, don't we? Or is that my age showing again?

GERRY

Well—

WOODROW

Computers are supposed to do the same thing every time, but if that's true, how come when we have a problem the IT guys always tell us to reboot? Makes no sense.

GERRY

Right, but the program—

WOODROW

Yes, yes, the program. We've looked at it and we see some problems. We—

DANA

Woodrow, the computer—

WOODROW

Excuse me, Dana.

DANA

Sorry. Go on.

WOODROW

(Pointedly.) Thank you. We do see some problems with that program.

DANA

The program gets data directly from the field—

WOODROW

From *people* in the field, right? People with their own biases, right?

DANA

(Mystified.) Biases? These are the people who are there, who know the conditions on the ground and—

WOODROW

Yes, on the ground. I love that expression. Conditions on the ground. As if they could be anywhere else.

DANA

Sure, but—

WOODROW

And the people on the ground have biases in their heads. So, Dana, maybe it's time for you folks to stop trusting that program and get with the program. Understand?

DANA

We shouldn't use it at all?

WOODROW

Temporarily, until we get it revamped to reflect Bob's philosophy, which is not your problem, Dana.

DANA

(Still slightly baffled.) I see.

MARTY

Woodrow, may I say something?

WOODROW

(Smiling broadly.) Everybody, please call me Woody. Woodrow is my name, but it sounds so formal, doesn't it?

MARTY

Okay, Woody. Is Bob's philosophy written down somewhere?

DANA

Woodrow—I mean, Woody, maybe I could explain what's behind Marty's question. He has to—

WOODROW

Pardon me, Dana, I think Marty was addressing me.

DANA

Yes, but—

WOODROW

Dana. Please don't interrupt. Your staff can speak for themselves, I believe.

DANA

Sorry.

WOODROW

(To MARTY.) He's still formulating it, Marty, adapting it to the organization he found here, an organization, I might add, he found in such disarray.

MARTY

Disarray? Well, whatever, you said that Gerry, well, all of us need to reflect—

WOODROW

The philosophy is still developing, as philosophies usually do. For the time being, you need to accept our course corrections. The way the Zen master uses emails—with no attachments. Get it?

MARTY

But Woody, I'm sorry if I'm out of line here, but I have to stand up in front of the donor reps and explain and justify what we're publishing and what we're doing, and honestly—with all due respect, and trust—I'm having trouble with it. Maybe if there was a document I could refer to—

WOODROW

(Pleasantly.) What you need to do, Marty, is tell the donor reps that Bob is bringing new ideas to bear. The reps should trust him, the same as you do.

MARTY

But Woody—

DANA

Woody—*(to MARTY)* excuse me, Marty—*(back to WOODROW)* I've sat in on Marty's recent briefings and it's hard not to suspect that the donors may be thinking of taking their money elsewhere.

WOODROW

Dana, Dana, Dana. What if they do? Do you think they're the only donors in the world?

DANA

I guess not. But they've been faithful and—

WOODROW

Dana, it's this kind of attitude that's been holding our organization back.

DANA

What?

WOODROW

Glo-Zar has been held back by stodgy thinking. And, frankly—and I don't mean to be insulting—you're part of that mindset. How could you not be? You're stuck, like almost everyone else in this backward, stodgy, organization. Which is why new leadership with new ideas is long overdue.

DANA

But Woody—

WOODROW

Dana, do you intend to challenge our new leadership?

DANA

Challenge? I don't know, I just think—

WOODROW

Thinking is good, Dana, but so is loyalty. Loyalty. You understand?

DANA does not speak, and there is an uncomfortable moment.

WOODROW (CONTINUED)

And sometimes you just need to accept.

DANA

I see.

WOODROW

Good. And that's a great segue into another topic. Reorganization. Starting now, Dana, you report directly to me.

DANA

Okay.

WOODROW

As will your remote staff, in the US and outside it, and Gerry and Marty.

DANA

(Absorbing the blow) I see.

WOODROW

Don't worry, Dana. You're still important to the organization. We're just shifting your responsibilities.

DANA

Right.

WOODROW

(To MARTY.) So, Marty, do you understand?

MARTY

I think so.

WOODROW

So you'll get your assignments from me, and you should direct questions to me. Of course, you should feel free to benefit from Dana's experience and wisdom, but *we* will be making the decisions.

MARTY

Okay.

WOODROW

(To GERRY.) Gerry, the same applies to you.

GERRY

Right.

WOODROW

And I would like to meet with you about that proposal.

GERRY

Of course. Any time.

WOODROW

Great. So, we all understand. (*Shifting into a pep talk.*) It's a new beginning. In a few months, we'll all see a new organization rising majestically from the mud it's in now. Actually, I sincerely believe we'll see the difference in weeks, not months. Gerry, do you agree?

GERRY

I guess.

WOODROW

Come on, now. You guess? Show some confidence.

GERRY

Well, sure.

WOODROW

That's better. Not great, but better. Marty?

MARTY

Yes. I'm sure there'll be a difference.

WOODROW

Don't go sarcastic on me, Marty.

MARTY

No. I'm sincere.

WOODROW

And you, Dana?

DANA

I'm certain you're right, Woody.

WOODROW

Great. *(Starts to get up, but stops.)* Oh, and one more thing, Dana? I'll be taking your office. I believe there's a spare cubical for you. You don't have to hurry to move, I'll be doing some traveling and won't need it for a couple weeks. I'll send you a date. *(Rises.)* Okay, folks, that's it. I'm excited. A new beginning. *(On his way out.)* Thanks, all.

WOODROW exits.

DANA, MARTY, and GERRY sit in silence for a long moment.

GERRY

What was that?

DANA

Woodrow. I've heard about him, but I'm still—

MARTY

Stodginess? What the hell's he talking about?

DANA

Nothing. It's the language of taking over.

MARTY

To get really un-stodgy, maybe I should wear a tank top, shorts, and flip-flops for the donor reps. Can we spike the drinks?

DANA

Marty—

MARTY

Really, Dana. Why not? My presentation will be meaningless, so who cares?

DANA

Take it easy, Marty.

MARTY

You're telling me to take it easy? I don't think you have the right to tell me anything anymore, Dana.

GERRY

(Shocked) Marty.

MARTY

(Beat.) I'm sorry. That was shitty, wasn't it.

DANA

It's okay. You're right.

MARTY

I wish I weren't.

Blackout.

Scene 10

Lights up on DANA on his office phone stage right, and SKYLAR on a phone in her office, stage left. DANA has his phone on speaker while he loads things into two boxes on his desk.

DANA

Marty's doing his briefing right now, I think.

SKYLAR

(Condescending.) I thought so. And you're not there, why?

DANA

He reports to Woody now.

SKYLAR

And Woody thought you should be there to back up the message about the auditors.

DANA

Auditors?

SKYLAR

The people who are supposed to watch what's—

DANA

Oh, you mean the monitors.

SKYLAR

Whatever.

DANA

What message?

SKYLAR

We're phasing them out.

DANA

(Takes in that last.) You're phasing out the monitors?

SKYLAR

The new policy. You did get the email, right?

DANA

What email?

SKYLAR

The one announcing—

DANA

I haven't seen any announcement about monitors.

SKYLAR

Maybe you should pay closer attention—

DANA

You can't do this. The monitors are key to our whole—

SKYLAR

Dana, I'm just the messenger. The decision's been made, which brings us back to why I called you. Marty's going to be a little upset that you weren't there to support him.

DANA

Support him about what?

SKYLAR

My god, Dana. Read your email.

SKYLAR hangs up and lights go out on her office.

MARTY enters DANA's office without knocking, goes to a guest chair and collapses into it, clearly upset.

DANA

Aren't you supposed to be doing your—*(Stopping himself as he sees MARTY's distress.)* What happened?

MARTY

You haven't heard?

DANA

(Figuring it out.) The monitors.

MARTY

So you didn't know.

DANA

No. Not until just a minute ago.

MARTY

Me too. Only I bet the way you found out was a little less humiliating than it was for me.

DANA

A little, maybe.

Blackout

Scene 11

Lights up on MARTY and GERRY outside, on the loading dock. MARTY is upset. We hear the traffic noise.

MARTY

He can't do this. The monitors are what make us special.

GERRY

Marty.

MARTY

Doesn't the asshole understand the concept of independent field auditors? Making sure we're always doing good instead of bad?

GERRY

Marty.

MARTY

No wonder the donor reps were so upset.

GERRY

There's nothing—

MARTY

What's next? Taking blood diamond money?

GERRY

Almost.

MARTY

(Taken aback.) What are you talking about?

GERRY

According to Woody, Bob wants to take money from—

MARTY

Let me guess. Organizations connected to certain governments with, shall we say, undemocratic tendencies.

GERRY

That's about it.

MARTY

Great. Just wonderful. Let's take money from the worst governments on earth. Why not? But first, let's take away our most important verification tool.

GERRY

Marty, there's nothing—

MARTY

It makes sense in a warped way. That explains why he doesn't care if the donors leave us. He's already got new ones.

GERRY

Marty, it's not personal.

MARTY

Not personal? Try looking like a fool in front of all those people and tell me it's not personal, because they knew the truth and I didn't. And then that Skylar asshole has the nerve to tell me it's my fault for not knowing what nobody saw fit to inform me of, and then she lies to me about that.

GERRY

What are you going to do?

MARTY

Bob's destroying an organization that I've believed in. I actually thought I was helping make the world better. Working for good instead of for profit. And now? Now I'm working for leg-breakers and assassins, because, those governments we're talking about? That's what they are. And that's really goddamn personal. Oh, and I almost forgot. People starving all over the world? That's personal too.

GERRY

Marty?

MARTY

(Calming.) I'm sorry. I shouldn't yell at you like that. I apologize.

GERRY

You sound like you're going to quit.

MARTY

(Takes a moment.) That's another problem. Beth got laid off.

GERRY

Marty, my god.

MARTY

So now we're a one-earner household with two-earner obligations. And here goes our savings. *(Takes a moment.)* So, what's new with you? What's Woody like?

GERRY

Sleazy. Hasn't made a move on me yet, but it won't shock me.

MARTY

That certainly sucks.

GERRY

He still likes my proposal, if that's anything.

MARTY

Great for you.

GERRY

He said Bob wants his name on it.

MARTY

Of course he does. Appalling but not surprising.

GERRY

Woody told me not to worry, Bob would reward me later.

MARTY

Sure he will. He'll reward all of us, but the reward might not feel so good.

Blackout.

Scene 12

Lights up on SKYLAR and LEE in a conference room. SKYLAR is standing and referring to a whiteboard with notes, numbers, and arrows scribbled on it.

SKYLAR

Are you convinced yet?

LEE

You should try writing TV scripts.

SKYLAR

Lee, do you lie awake at night thinking up ways to insult people?

LEE

A job where fiction is called for.

SKYLAR

What's your problem, Lee? What's keeping you from getting with the program?

LEE

Your program is a made-up policy based on numbers invented by clueless people.

SKYLAR

If you reported to me—

LEE

You would torture me into submission or fire me for insubordination.

SKYLAR

I want—

LEE

You want me to turn Bob's bullshit into cherry pie.

SKYLAR

Bob is dedicated to—

LEE

To siphoning off as much money as he can.

SKYLAR takes a beat.

SKYLAR

(Quietly and deadly.) Lee, people put up with a lot from you. A cantankerous old fart. Have you heard that?

LEE

(Laughs.) Oh, I've heard much worse.

SKYLAR

I'll bet. But we won't put up with it. Do you understand?

LEE

It suits you, I have to admit.

SKYLAR

What suits me?

LEE

The gangster act. Straight from a movie. You do the cliché well but you're still ridiculous.

SKYLAR

(He's gotten to her.) Ridiculous?

LEE

In the purest sense of the word. Worthy of ridicule.

SKYLAR

You think this is all a joke?

LEE

I would think you're doing comedy if it weren't so damn serious—

SKYLAR

Lee—

LEE

—and if you had a sense of humor.

SKYLAR

Lee, will you please—

LEE

(Rising and gathering his things from the table.) Skylar, I'll create your damn reports from your fairyland numbers, and I'll make them look like real reports. I'll give you bar charts and pie charts and cake charts and ice cream charts. But they won't have my name on them. Okay?

LEE exits.

Blackout.

Scene 13

Lights up on what was DANA's office. WOODROW is seated behind the desk. MARTY is standing in front of it next to the guest chair.

WOODROW

Relax, son. Sit down. No need to be nervous with me. Want some coffee?

MARTY sits.

MARTY

No, thanks. Woody, I'm having a problem . . .

WOODROW

Let me guess. The donor reps. The best thing is to just tell them the truth.

MARTY

I don't really know what that is.

WOODROW

Dana was supposed to brief you.

MARTY

Dana? I thought I reported directly to you.

WOODROW

You do. But Dana's supposed to keep people informed.

MARTY

I see him every day, I'll just ask—

WOODROW

I don't think talking to Dana is such a good idea.

MARTY

But you just said part of his job is to keep people informed, and isn't talking—

WOODROW

Marty. Are you telling me how to delegate?

MARTY

(Getting it.) Of course not.

WOODROW

Heard what the obese guy said when a charity asked him to donate his old clothes to help starving people? He said that anyone who could wear his clothes was not starving.

MARTY

Ha. Funny.

WOODROW

(Ignoring MARTY's response to his joke.) So. Donor reps. Tell them we have a new way of seeing the numbers.

MARTY

But I don't understand it. And what about the monitors?

WOODROW

Know why the auditor crossed the road? To count the chickens on the other side.

MARTY

Really, Woody, I—

WOODROW

Lousy, huh? Just trying to lighten things up. Marty, I know the auditors, I mean monitors, seemed like a good idea. Maybe for a while they were. But now we think they're getting in the way.

MARTY

But the reps—

WOODROW

The reps will understand if you explain well enough.

MARTY

I've been the donor rep liaison for four years. I see them all at least once a month, some more. I think of many of them as friends.

WOODROW

(He gets up, paces the office.) That might be a problem, Marty. You can't get personal with such people.

MARTY

I've been told to view my job as a collaboration.

WOODROW

The old way, Marty. That's the old.

MARTY

They'll stop giving.

WOODROW

Got it covered.

MARTY

Some of the new donors seem sort of—

WOODROW

Not nice? A misconception. Believe me, we've contacted them, and they're eager to be part of what we do.

MARTY

Why?

WOODROW

Why would they be eager? You do ask a lot of questions, Marty.

MARTY

With respect, Woody, I can't address them out of ignorance.

WOODROW

Heard the one about the guy who entered a ten-K race for disabled children because he thought that against them, he might finally win?

MARTY

Uh—

WOODROW

Don't take things so seriously, Marty.

MARTY

But my job—

WOODROW

You have to laugh sometimes.

MARTY

Okay.

WOODROW pauses to consider. Turns to look out the window.

WOODROW

See that tall sort of silver building there.

MARTY

(Baffled.) Sure.

WOODROW

Another organization, a lot like ours, you might say one of our competitors, has offices near the top. About twenty stories above ours.

MARTY

Right.

WOODROW

We need to be up there, Marty.

MARTY

So we're moving to there?

WOODROW

(Turns to face MARTY.) I don't mean literally. We need to be higher, if you know what I mean.

MARTY

I'm sorry, Woody, I'm missing something. We haven't really thought of ourselves as competing. In fact, we've collaborated with them *(gesturing out the window)*.

WOODROW

Yeah. We collaborate. We don't compete. So, naturally, we don't win. Get it?

MARTY

I think . . .

WOODROW

Good. I'll make sure you get more info. I'm sure you can handle it.

MARTY

Okay.

WOODROW

Anything else?

MARTY takes the hint and rises. WOODROW sits and turns his attention to his desk. MARTY watches him.

WOODROW (CONTINUED)

(Looks up at MARTY.) Thanks, Marty.

MARTY does not move.

WOODROW (CONTINUED)

(With emphasis.) Thanks, Marty.

MARTY does not move.

Blackout.

End of Act I

Act II

Scene 1

Lights up on MARTY on the loading dock, checking his phone.

DANA enters.

DANA

Why the private conference room?

MARTY

Woody told me I'm not supposed to talk to you, so I shouldn't be seen—

DANA

He can't tell you who you can talk to.

MARTY

I just needed—

DANA

If you're looking for wisdom I'm fresh out.

MARTY waits.

DANA (CONTINUED)

I'm sorry. That was insensitive, wasn't it. I guess I'm just not feeling very wise these days.

MARTY

I've got a comedy problem.

DANA

Woody's jokes?

MARTY

My wife just got laid off.

DANA

I'm sorry.

MARTY

And she's expecting.

DANA

(Smiling) Congratulations, that's wonderful. But I don't see—

MARTY

The secret of . . .

DANA

(Getting it.) Oh, yeah. Timing.

MARTY

Exactly.

DANA

I've got one myself. Two kids in college.

MARTY

Wow. So, is there hope here?

DANA

Of course. There's always hope. Just keep doing your job.

MARTY

I don't know what it is.

DANA

Me neither.

MARTY

So what are we supposed to do?

DANA

Here's my cheap advice. Keep your head down, shuffle papers, and try not to be noticed.

MARTY

How do I do that with the donor reps?

DANA

Good question. *(Trying to lighten)* Just go with the flow, roll with the punches, get with the program.

MARTY

Beth suggested that maybe I should write to the board of directors.

DANA

With all due respect to Beth, what on earth for?

MARTY

To tell them what's going on.

DANA

You think they don't know?

MARTY

If they do, would they be happy that big donors are leaving? That the monitor system is being wrecked? That our mission statement is being ignored? That the organization we've worked for is being warped beyond recognition? That people depending on us—

DANA

Whoa. Slow down.

MARTY

This is all making me sick, Dana. I go home and run five miles and I'm still so anxious I don't know what to do. I can't sleep and I'm making things even harder on Beth. So maybe it's time to appeal to the board. How can it hurt?

DANA

The board hired this guy, right? You think they want to admit publicly, after only a few months, that they made a huge mistake?

MARTY

But maybe—

DANA

(Finding his own anger at the situation.) And that's just the start. Our directors are the CEOs of other companies, non-profits like us and for-profits too. Our CEO sits on their boards and they sit on ours. It's sort of a club.

MARTY

But—

DANA

Clubs are usually for fun, right? Golf, rock-climbing, chess, model trains, cocktail parties. But this club is serious and we're not allowed in, and we're not allowed to know the secrets, like why they hired him.

MARTY

So what do we do?

DANA

Marty, you're a good man, but you have to look out for yourself. Look for a new job. But wherever you go, don't count on working for angels.

MARTY

So just pull down the check.

DANA

Sure.

MARTY

Woody says he sees a good future for me here, but I don't trust him.

DANA

Trust him? He's a fucking grifter. I wouldn't trust him with pizza money.

MARTY

But they've totally disrespected you.

DANA

(Admitting the point.) Yeah. That's the hard part. To them we're just so much shit to be flushed away.

Beat.

MARTY

I don't know if I can handle it.

DANA

You can. You're tougher than you think. I'd better get back.

DANA starts to leave.

MARTY

Thanks, Dana. You've helped.

DANA

I don't think so.

Blackout.

Scene 2

Lights up on WOODROW and DANA in what used to be DANA's office and is now WOODROW's. WOODROW is behind the desk, DANA is in a guest chair.

DANA

We're very proud of them.

WOODROW

Of course, but the cost? Wow.

DANA

We get by. One's in a state school.

WOODROW

And the other's in an Ivy.

DANA

(Puzzled.) How did you—

WOODROW

From what I hear, state schools can be just as expensive as privates.

DANA

Actually, the privates have a lot more discretion about aid, so in fact—

WOODROW

(Changing the subject) How's the cubicle working for you?

DANA

All I need is a job and a chair.

WOODROW

That's what I like about you, Dana. You don't make demands and you don't complain. Remind me what you're working on now?

DANA

I'm ready for any assignment.

WOODROW

Of course you are. That's Dana all over. Want some coffee?

DANA

Sure.

As he talks, WOODROW pours coffee for the two of them, resolving through gestures with DANA that DANA takes it black. WOODROW relaxes back in his chair.

WOODROW

Heard about the killer who strolls into a big office with his AK-47 and spends a whole afternoon picking off middle managers, until finally, by mistake, he shoots a secretary, and *then* someone calls police.

DANA

(Forcing a smile.) That's a new one for me.

WOODROW

I won't lie to you, Dana. There are some people who think you're superfluous.

DANA

Woody, if you have bad news—

WOODROW

(Ignoring him.) But there are others, like me, for instance, who disagree.

DANA

(Wary.) Thanks.

WOODROW

I mean, you've been here a long time, you know all the ropes, all the customs, the culture, all the written stuff, and all the unwritten stuff, not to mention where all the graves are. Am I right?

DANA

I don't know, I really don't pay—

WOODROW

And all the people. Their strengths, their weaknesses.

DANA

I know a lot of people, but I couldn't speak about—

WOODROW

Come on, Dana. You've guessed where this is going, haven't you?

DANA

Not really.

WOODROW

How'd you like to be back in an office? It's a nice one, right next door. Just vacated. What was his name? Eddie?

DANA

Ernie.

WOODROW

Yeah, Ernie. He's gone. Not a team player.

DANA

I see.

WOODROW

We need you, Dana. Be my right hand. Do research, follow-up on various projects, compile reports, write advisories for me and Bob. How does that sound?

DANA

(Wary.) Fine.

WOODROW

(Shifting.) Don't believe all the rumors about us. How we don't care about people. How mean we are.

DANA

I never—

WOODROW

Seriously, we were put on earth to help others, but why are *they* here?

DANA

The others.

WOODROW

You've heard that one. And of course you've heard the rumors, but take it from me, it's all a crock. It's true, Bob is a disrupter, and maybe I'm his co-disrupter, but disruption isn't always bad, right? Blow the dust off things, get outside the box and knock the walls down, let the light in. Right?

DANA

House cleaning can be good.

WOODROW

I don't expect you to trust me completely, Dana, you don't know me. But please, give us a chance.

DANA is silent.

WOODROW (CONTINUED)

(Another shift.) You play piano, I hear.

DANA

(Off balance.) I have, in the past.

WOODROW

Jazz, right?

DANA

Yes.

WOODROW

I'm a jazz fan myself. We should go clubbing some time.

DANA

Okay.

WOODROW

I'll bet you were pretty good once. I'll bet you still practice.

DANA

When I get the chance.

WOODROW

Which isn't often, right? Ever wish you could get more of a chance? Maybe get good again and maybe get some gigs? Put together a trio?

DANA

(Mystified.) With work and family, it's hard.

WOODROW

Sure it is. Even if you find the time, you don't have the energy, right? Ah, life and its obligations. I have my other stuff too, you know? I mean besides cooking. Oil painting. Landscapes, mainly. Bet you never thought of me as an artist.

DANA

As you said we don't know each other.

WOODROW

Sometimes I wish Bob would get pissed at me and give me more time for my art. But responsibilities. If those kids in college only knew, huh?

DANA

(Getting it.) Right.

WOODROW

I can see we understand each other. I trust you to do the same superlative work in your new position as you did in the old, and then, unfortunately, not much time for piano.

DANA

Thanks.

WOODROW

You bet.

Blackout.

Scene 3

Lights up on SKYLAR, stage left, in an office, and WOODROW, stage right, in the office that was once DANA's. They are on voice phone with each other.

SKYLAR

(She is searching her screen for an email.) Let's see. Oh, here it is. I'm reading it now.

WOODROW

Fine. Take your time.

SKYLAR

(Speaking while reading quietly to herself.) Okay . . . I see . . . what? Woody, I don't understand.

WOODROW

I think it's pretty clear.

SKYLAR

I was following policy.

WOODROW

Following, honey?

SKYLAR

(Irritated by the "honey".) Yes, following.

WOODROW

When you get ahead of things, that's not following, dear.

SKYLAR

What do you mean?

WOODROW

You went past what we advised—

SKYLAR

I was taking initiative. What's wrong with—

WOODROW

Don't interrupt me, dear. About that email you sent to a long list of managers, VPs, and god knows who else. You didn't, by any chance, blind copy anyone, did you?

SKYLAR

(Slightly shaken.) Well, no, of course—

WOODROW

Don't lie to me, dear, it just proves that you knew you were going too far.

SKYLAR

But, Woody—

WOODROW

You were trying to lead, dear. And that's not your place.

SKYLAR

(Commandingly, trying for control.) Listen, Woody—

WOODROW

In the future, you will leave leadership to Bob. He's the pilot, and I'm the co-pilot, and you, to extend the metaphor, are a flight attendant. A stewardess, we used to call them. A lead stewardess, but a stewardess nonetheless. Dear.

SKYLAR

(The stewardess part stings. She swings for a knockout.) Woody, ask Bob about my *place*, as you put it. Just ask him.

WOODROW

Do you think you have some special relationship with Bob just because you shared some intimacy? And do you think we haven't talked about it?

SKYLAR

(Realizing her punch missed.) Well, no, I—

WOODROW

It's something that happened, Skylar. He enjoyed it and hopes you did too. But don't think it's anything more.

SKYLAR

No. Of course not.

WOODROW

And from now on, exercise some caution, some prudence. Okay, Skylar, dear?

SKYLAR

Yes.

WOODROW

If you do, you may still have a future here. Who knows? He may want to see you again. That would be nice, wouldn't it?

SKYLAR

Yes. Of course.

WOODROW

Good. And don't ever get any ideas about talking about this to anyone. Trust me, it won't help you.

SKYLAR

No. Yes. Of course.

He hangs up, satisfied, and then she does, shaken.

Blackout.

Scene 4

Lights up on DANA in his new office, stage right, and KADEN in hers, stage left. They are on cell phones. As they speak, they may pace about, look out windows toward the audience, or otherwise move.

KADEN

How's that new office?

DANA

Beats unemployment.

KADEN

You've heard the latest about the money?

I've heard some rumors, sure.

DANA

It all fits.

KADEN

I always—

DANA

Try to be positive, I know.

KADEN

I was going to say skeptical.

DANA

But suppose it's true. Suppose there's a hundred dollars in the bank and it gets transferred to another bank and after the transfer there's only ninety—

KADEN

The transfer fee?

DANA

I'm oversimplifying here to make a point.

KADEN

I understand, but without more evidence—

DANA

What other explanation is there, Dana?

KADEN

Without knowing more facts—

DANA

But what if we knew them? What if there was enough evidence.

KADEN

That's a big hypothetical.

DANA

Isn't it. Later.

KADEN

They end the call.

Blackout.

Scene 5

MARTY and GERRY at a small table in a bar, drinking beer. They are fighting, in what is, essentially, a lovers' quarrel.

GERRY

(Accusing.) I don't understand.

MARTY

Cut me some slack, Gerry.

GERRY

All that stuff about how proud you were. How you loved your work.

MARTY

Stop.

GERRY

How you loved Unified Help.

MARTY

Gerry, please.

GERRY

And then the bad stuff started happening, and now on top of everything else, comes the plain old-fashioned graft. Isn't that what you called it?

MARTY

We don't know that it's graft, and besides, it's not that simple.

GERRY

It was simple before.

MARTY

What's that supposed to mean?

GERRY

Before Bob, it was simple. What we were doing was good.

MARTY

It wasn't—

GERRY

And then along came Bob, and he was bad.

MARTY

Alright, Gerry, I get the point—

GERRY

And he made you look foolish. Remember that?

MARTY

Gerry, it's not—

GERRY

Do you?

MARTY says nothing.

GERRY (CONTINUED)

Speak, dammit.

MARTY

Okay. I'll speak. If you'll stop. Okay? Please?

GERRY

(Not giving in.) Go on.

MARTY

(Sarcastic.) Thank you. *(Earnest.)* It's true, what you say, at least a lot of it. But maybe I was wrong. Did that ever occur to you?

GERRY

That mister know-it-all was wrong?

MARTY

What?

GERRY

I'm sorry, but that's how you acted. Mister knows-everything. Mister righteous. The part you played. And what pisses me off now is how I bought it.

MARTY

Maybe you shouldn't have.

GERRY

Now you tell me.

MARTY

Yeah, I was righteous. It was comfortable.

GERRY

So you shouldn't have been?

MARTY

Maybe I should have taken a closer look. Did you think everything was perfect then? Maybe we were too soft. Too accepting. Maybe our glorious do-gooding was blinding us.

GERRY

And now you've seen the light.

MARTY

What's wrong with a little competition?

GERRY

A little what?

MARTY

Maybe by competing for donor dollars, instead of just expecting them to appear, we'd get more, and then be able to help more. And why should we be so picky about where they come from?

GERRY

From leg-breakers and assassins. Your words, not mine.

MARTY

Your problem is you think there were no problems before.

GERRY

Of course I don't think that.

MARTY

No? You have to admit, you are kind of naïve.

GERRY

Oh, sure, I'm just a naïve little girl. You are priceless. You were right before and now you've done a one-eighty and you're still right.

MARTY

I've thought about things. What's wrong with that?

GERRY

Thinking? Not a fucking thing. I should have done more. I'm a goddamn fool for ever listening to you.

MARTY

Maybe if you hadn't been so naïve—

GERRY

I wasn't naïve. I was new, Marty. I trusted you to tell me the truth about Glo-Zar—

MARTY

Which I did—

GERRY

Except now you're telling me you didn't. Who's the real Marty? Before or after? Which one should I trust?

MARTY

I wish I could make you understand—

GERRY

(Used up.) I do understand, Marty. Only tell me something. Is it just about money?

MARTY

Not just, but a big part of it is. Without new money—

GERRY

No, Marty, not Glo-Zar's money. Your money.

MARTY

That's really none of your business, Gerry.

GERRY

So money's tight for you, I understand. But does Beth really want you to betray your principles?

MARTY

Don't put it on her.

GERRY

It's you I care about, Marty.

Beat.

MARTY

I know, Gerry.

GERRY

Is she pressuring you about money?

MARTY

No. She's not like that. But there's her and a kid pretty soon.

GERRY

You'll take care of your family, Marty.

MARTY

But that's not it.

GERRY

I'd understand if it was.

MARTY

I know you would. But you wouldn't think much of me.

GERRY

Marty—

MARTY

I've had to re-examine things, Gerry, and I know it sounds like bullshit—

GERRY

No, Marty—

MARTY

It does. If I were you I'd think the same thing. But even without my money worries, I think, before, I was kind of a puritan about things. And who am I to be that way? What matters is how much Glo-Zar can do.

GERRY

(Not wanting to quarrel any more.) That's right, Marty.

MARTY

So I'm staying.

GERRY

I wish you the best, Marty. I really do.

MARTY

So you're not.

GERRY

No. I can't.

They take a moment to look at each other.

MARTY

Right away?

GERRY

I want to find something new first. And then to give at least two weeks notice.

MARTY

So we'll see each other around.

GERRY

Yes.

MARTY

Sometimes I wish—

GERRY

Let's leave it there, Marty. Okay?

She takes one last look, and exits, leaving him alone.

Blackout.

Scene 6

Lights up on MARTY, giving his regular donor rep presentation, remote control in hand, gesturing at the unseen slides behind him.

MARTY

(With forced cheerfulness.) So that's it. The money flow, how it used to be, how it is, and how we've improved it. We're helping more people around the world, helping them more efficiently and effectively, and with less money. Any questions?

He scans the room.

None? Well. I'll just add that we're very proud of the changes we've made. Under our new leadership, we've thought outside the old box so much that there's not much of it left. We think you'll be as pleased and proud as we are. So, no questions at all?

He scans the room again.///

Wow. If there are no questions, we must be doing something right. I won't keep you anymore. Have a great week.

He smiles broadly as he watches people file out.

Oh, and be sure to grab some food on the way out. If you don't, it'll make us all fat. A pastry, some fruit. I think we have four kinds of coffee, and I don't know how many kinds of tea. Enjoy.

Blackout.

Scene 7

Lights up on KADEN and LEE in her office. Her laptop is open on the desk. As they speak, they are referencing what's on the screen.

KADEN

Makes no sense, does it.

LEE

Only in a very perverse way.

KADEN

What happened?

LEE

I told you, Kaden. I tried to warn you. Remember?

KADEN

And you can't resist saying you told me so.

LEE

When you're in my position—

KADEN

Alright, Lee. *(Indicating computer.)* Now could you please explain this?

Beat.

LEE

I backed the whole database up first.

KADEN

(Not understanding, but suspicious.) Okay. But that wouldn't explain . . .

LEE

So I've got the real data.

KADEN

(Starting to figure it out.) Real?

LEE

Some changes were made.

KADEN

By?

LEE

I don't know. Somebody on the other coast, I believe.

KADEN

But you haven't quit over it.

LEE

I never said—

KADEN

How else do you resist, Lee? You think they'll listen to your arguments?

LEE

The backup storage may have vulnerabilities that certain people allegedly representing certain people who might have been monitors might conceivably find a way to possibly exploit.

She stares at him, amused.

LEE (CONTINUED)

What?

KADEN

Be careful.

LEE

I'm a hundred and fifty years old. Why should I be careful?

KADEN

Lee, while you were doing that snooping—I mean, reading—about the new CEO—oh, and Woodrow, too?

LEE

Of course.

KADEN

While you were doing that, you didn't by any chance stumble onto anything that might be, um, what's the word? Weaponized?

LEE

I'm shocked you would even suspect me of doing such a thing.

KADEN

(Takes a moment.) Woodrow wants me to be the authority on this stuff. Give it some credibility.

LEE

A bad position.

KADEN

What would you do?

LEE

In my position—

KADEN

In mine.

LEE

Purposely burned all my bridges to your position, decades ago. So I can't even imagine it.

KADEN

But what would you advise me to do?

LEE

That's a tough one.

KADEN

I'm not letting you dodge it, Lee. When you first warned me—

LEE

I wasn't telling you what to do, except to be ready.

KADEN

Okay. Now I'm ready. Now what?

LEE

Decide.

KADEN

Decide?

LEE

All anyone can do.

KADEN

A big help you are.

Blackout.

Scene 8

Lights up on KADEN, standing center stage in an iso light and delivering a presentation to a middle-management audience. She holds a remote. She references unseen slides behind her.

Seated stage right, in dim light, is WOODROW, watching and reacting.

KADEN

(Lecturing, like a college professor.) So, folks, you've seen the problems with the monitors, and you've seen some references to how the data's been changed to reflect our new management's vision. In later slides you'll see more about the problems and how they stemmed from some conscious decisions by some field personnel. Specifically, there is a finding that monitors, shall we say, diverted money improperly.

KADEN clicks her remote for the next slide.

Column one summarizes this. We don't know exactly how they went about it, but the discrepancies you see wouldn't be there if a lot of them hadn't been up to something. Right? *(Answering herself.)* Right. As Bob says, something was going on here.

She points and clicks the remote again.

Here you can see some old data, alongside some new data, and how the corrections were made. This is clear evidence. Clear evidence that . . .

She pauses. Her tone becomes personal, almost confessional.

I drilled down to the monitoring data and compared it to what you see in the program. The connections that used to be there, that were built-in, are gone. Which means there was some data manipulation. Which means.

She pauses to decide.

Which means I can't do this. I can't.

Blackout.

Scene 9

Lights up on the loading dock, with the usual background of traffic noise. DANA and KADEN enter holding paper cups of coffee.

KADEN

Ah. The privacy of the loading dock.

DANA

I wish we had time to go somewhere else.

KADEN

Bob ordered me to get on the first plane. Naturally it was the red-eye.

DANA

Did Skylar come with you?

KADEN

(Laughs.) You haven't heard?

DANA

I guess not.

KADEN

She's gone. Got too big for her panties, if you know what I mean.

DANA

That's priceless.

They pause to smile about SKYLAR.

KADEN

I understand you chair these meetings.

DANA

Sure. I call on people to talk, except that Bob talks whenever he wants to and Woody talks when Bob doesn't.

KADEN

So you'll be calling on me.

DANA

I suppose. Woody gives me the agenda.

KADEN

(Changing the subject) I may have some family members who'll have to find another piggy bank, get jobs, cut expenses, whatever.

DANA

I'm thinking you can hang on. You're too good for them to fire.

KADEN

I don't know. What about you?

DANA

I'm still hoping I can keep things from going totally off the rails. If I can get them to listen, which I probably can't.

KADEN

You can if anyone can.

DANA

(Forcing a joke.) Hey, if we both quit, we could form a consulting firm.

KADEN

(Going along.) Sure. People would flock to us to learn how to run a global charity. We'd get rich. *(Switching.)* Hey, after the meeting we could get that dinner we always talk about. My plane is tonight, but it's—

DANA

Probably not a good time, Kaden. I'd like to.

KADEN

No, probably not the best time.

DANA

I'd better get back. See you this afternoon.

KADEN

Right. This afternoon.

A beat while they look at each other.

Blackout.

Scene 10

Lights up on WOODROW's office. WOODROW is shuffling papers, checking his computer screen.

KADEN is at the door holding a sheet of paper with something printed on it. She stands there for a moment, looking at WOODROW, who does not notice her.

KADEN

Hello, Woody.

WOODROW

(He looks up and smiles.) Well, Kaden. Glad you could make it. Have a seat. Coffee? Water?

KADEN

(She sits.) I'm fine.

WOODROW

Are you really?

KADEN

Fine.

WOODROW

I was worried about you after that managers' meeting. You seemed unwell.

KADEN

I'm fine, Woody.

WOODROW

Well. Now we have a chance to talk things out and redeem ourselves.

KADEN

(Laughs.) Redeem ourselves?

WOODROW

In today's meeting. Bob will be there, and he'll have some expectations. Have you heard the one about—

KADEN

Woody. We're wasting time. I won't be there this afternoon.

WOODROW

Excuse me?

KADEN

What I said in the managers' meeting? I can't do this? Well, I can't. I've had it.

WOODROW

Can't what?

KADEN

Lie.

WOODROW

(Dismissively) Oh, come on, Kaden.

She leans forward and drops the sheet of paper on his desk.

WOODROW

What's this? *(He reads it.)* You're not serious.

KADEN

I can't go along with the crap.

WOODROW

Kaden—

KADEN

Don't pretend, Woody. You know exactly what I'm talking about.

WOODROW

I'm afraid I don't.

KADEN

Manipulating the data? Ignoring facts? Outright lying? I can't help you with that.

WOODROW

We never—

KADEN

If you're not lying you must be totally deluded. You should see a therapist.

WOODROW

I'll let you take all this back, Kaden. If you don't, you'll regret it.

KADEN

Oh, I think there'll be lots of regrets around here, Woody.

She goes to the door.

WOODROW

If you're thinking of something splashy, I would advise—

KADEN

Oh, shut up, Woody.

She exits.

Blackout.

Scene 11

Lights up on WOODROW, behind his desk, GERRY in the guest chair in front of it.

WOODROW

So, why do you think I asked you here, Gerry?

GERRY

I don't know, Woody.

WOODROW

(Pleasantly) You have talent, Gerry.

GERRY

(Uncomfortable) Thank you.

WOODROW

And a good understanding of the organization. Your work is quite impressive.

GERRY

Thank you.

WOODROW

Unexpected in someone so young.

She says nothing.

WOODROW (CONTINUED)

(Very earnestly) I'm sorry if I'm making you uncomfortable. Want some coffee?
Bottle of water?

GERRY

No, thanks, I'm good.

WOODROW

Have you heard about our new policy on personal days? You get a hundred and four, all on Saturdays and Sundays.

GERRY smiles weakly.

WOODROW (CONTINUED)

Lame, huh? *(Switching.)* Tell me about Marty.

GERRY

(Baffled, not expecting this.) What?

WOODROW

What do you think of him? As a worker, what do you think?

GERRY

He does his job well, as far as I can see. He's dedicated.

WOODROW

You like him?

GERRY

Sure. He helped me a lot when I was new.

WOODROW

So you're friends?

GERRY

Yes.

WOODROW

Just at work.

GERRY

(Getting the implication) Yes. Just at work. Once in a while we have drinks after work, but—

WOODROW

Never mind. I can tell you're a young lady of high principles. I just wondered.

A silence.

WOODROW (CONTINUED)

You like working with statistics?

GERRY

I do.

WOODROW

But you know they can be misleading.

GERRY

Not if they're—

WOODROW

For instance, five out of six people think Russian roulette is safe.

GERRY says nothing.

WOODROW (CONTINUED)

(Smiling, finally seductive.) Even safer than sleeping with an older man, and that's pretty safe.

GERRY says nothing.

WOODROW (CONTINUED)

(Laughing easily.) Jokes, Gerry. We all respect what you do.

GERRY rises from her chair, speaking as she goes to the door.

GERRY

Thank you, Woody. I have work I should get back to.

WOODROW

(Still smiling.) Of course, you do. You've got that attitude we all love. Maybe you've been in a funk lately, what with all the changes to what you were used to, but I'm sure you'll come around.

At the exit, GERRY stops and turns to look at WOODROW for a moment.

WOODROW (CONTINUED)

(Pleasantly.) If you have anything to say, Gerry, go ahead.

GERRY

Why?

WOODROW

Why what?

GERRY

Any of it.

WOODROW

Why was I asking you about Marty?

GERRY

I've been told I'm just a young, naïve girl—

WOODROW

Not by me—

GERRY

—and maybe so, maybe that's why I just don't understand.

WOODROW

Whatever are you talking about?

GERRY

Is it just money? Because if it is, it seems to me there would have been easier ways.

WOODROW

Now just a minute—

GERRY

Because while you were plundering the organization you were also humiliating people.

WOODROW

Come on, Gerry—

GERRY

And I don't just mean Marty, though you've done a good enough job of that.

WOODROW

I'll have you know that Marty has—

GERRY

You've trampled on our rules, ruined our reputation, turned us into one of your stupid jokes, and wrecked our morale.

WOODROW

I think that's enough, Gerry.

GERRY

If all you wanted was money, why didn't you just take it?

WOODROW

You're right about being naïve.

GERRY

Then tell, me Woody, please. I'd like to understand. Was it ego? Was it fun? Was it just so your boss could boast—

WOODROW

Your problem is you've been listening too much to people like Dana.

GERRY

Dana?

WOODROW

You know why I took you away from him, Gerry? Because I saw value in you, but it was being smothered by Dana and his ilk, people who think they're better.

GERRY

Better?

WOODROW

Yes, better. Better than me, better than Bob, and better than you, too, I think. I think you're smart enough to understand that investment—real investment, of money—isn't such a terrible thing, even for Glo-Zar We make such a big deal out of helping the down-trodden, which, by the way, is a load, Gerry.

GERRY

But that's—

WOODROW

These people the organization fed and clothed and housed for all these years, oh, how noble everyone felt about that. But nothing ever changed, really. Those poor, degraded people were just kept on life support when everyone, even they, would be better off if we just pulled the plug.

GERRY

You really believe that?

WOODROW

I think you know it's true, Gerry. You're just not ready to admit it.

GERRY

I don't—

WOODROW

Come on, Gerry. A smart girl like you? Wouldn't you like a little benefit?

GERRY

(Quietly.) I don't think so, Woody.

WOODROW

I can't hear you, Gerry.

GERRY

(Clearly.) I don't think so.

DANA appears silently in the doorway. GERRY has his back to him, but WOODROW sees him.

WOODROW

Be careful, Gerry. Once you burn the bridge—

GERRY sees WOODROW looking past her, and turning, sees DANA. They exchange a look. She exits, brushing past DANA, who watches her leave.

WOODROW

(Smiling.) Dana. Come on in. Have a seat.

DANA

What just—

WOODROW

Don't worry about it. Sit.

DANA sits in a guest chair.

WOODROW (CONTINUED)

I've looked at your latest report.

Blackout.

Scene 12

Lights up on center stage, which is now a private room of a bar/restaurant. The conference table is now a buffet table with hors d'oeuvres, pitchers of punch, bottles of red and white wine, plates, glasses, utensils, etc. A couple of small tables and chairs, with candles. The entrance is upstage so that the audience can see who comes in.

All the characters in this scene wear casual clothes: nice jeans, etc.

DANA is sipping a drink. He looks at his watch. He goes upstage and takes something from the food table and munches. He looks out through an unseen window, downstage. He checks his watch again.

MARTY stands at the upstage (unseen) doorway, unsure of himself. DANA has his back to MARTY and is unaware of him until MARTY speaks.

MARTY

Hi, Dana.

DANA turns to greet MARTY. As they speak DANA goes to MARTY and they shake hands. DANA tries to hug, but MARTY shies away.

DANA

Marty. I'm so glad you could come. It's great to see you.

MARTY

Thanks. Likewise.

DANA

You look like you lost a little weight.

MARTY

Yeah. I'm in better shape than I was. You too?

DANA

A lot of tennis and golf. Retirement, you know?

MARTY

I don't, but—

DANA

Of course you don't know. How could you, a young guy like you. Hey, you want a drink? There's wine here. If you want a beer or something hard you'll have to go back out to the bar, but (*apologetic*) you'll have to pay. I just couldn't afford . .

MARTY

The wine looks good.

MARTY goes to the food/drinks table.

DANA

Help yourself to some food too.

As DANA speaks, MARTY goes to the bar and gets a glass of wine. He ignores the food.

DANA (CONTINUED)

So, what are you doing these days?

MARTY

Cabinetry.

DANA

(Surprised.) Really.

MARTY

I've always liked woodworking.

DANA

I had no idea.

As DANA speaks, KADEN stands in the entrance, smiling at DANA. She already holds a drink of some kind of brown whiskey.

DANA (CONTINUED)

Well, look who made it.

As they speak KADEN and DANA move to each other and hug.

KADEN

I would have rescheduled the Olympics to see you. *(As she breaks away from him.)* Will you look at this healthy guy?

DANA

Retirement. Turns out I like it, as I was just telling Marty.

KADEN notices MARTY for the first time.

KADEN

(Smiling.) Well, Marty.

She goes to MARTY and they shake hands as they talk.

KADEN (CONTINUED)

You look good. Don't tell me you retired too.

MARTY

(Shyly.) No. Been working out more, though.

KADEN

I can tell. If you weren't married and I were younger . . .

DANA

(*To KADEN.*) So, you managed to fiddle with your schedule.

KADEN

Yeah. Remember when we joked about forming a consulting firm?

DANA

I do, yeah.

GERRY is standing in the entrance. DANA and KADEN, their attention on each other, do not notice her and continue speaking. MARTY, who has drifted off to a corner, does, but he does not speak. GERRY sees him, but quickly looks away.

KADEN

Turns out it's not so bad. I get tired sometimes, but other times I get to see old friends.

GERRY

Hello.

DANA and KADEN look away from each other and see her. DANA walks to her and takes her hand and brings her in as they talk.

DANA

Gerry, come on in, you look great. Get a glass of wine, some food.

GERRY

Thanks. Just some, what is this, juice?

DANA

Lemonade, I think.

GERRY pours herself a glass of lemonade. There is an awkward silence as suddenly nobody knows what to say.

DANA

So, how are you?

GERRY

Okay. New job. The pay isn't so great, but . . .

KADEN

You know, I didn't get to see you too much but I think I would have remembered that ring.

GERRY

Oh, this. *(She holds her hand up, but not too high.)* Yeah.

DANA

When?

GERRY

In a couple months.

KADEN

Congratulations.

GERRY

Thanks. *(Proudly.)* Right after that I have my masters finals, so I'm busy.

DANA

That's great.

DANA notices that GERRY has turned to look at MARTY, who has not spoken.

DANA (CONTINUED)

Marty, why so quiet . . .

DANA stops himself as he sees how GERRY and MARTY are now looking at each other. GERRY puts her wine glass down on a table. She goes to MARTY and embraces him, but he is stiff, with his arms out until he does return the hug, but just barely.

KADEN and DANA watch, embarrassed.

KADEN

(Sotto voce and gesturing with her hands to DANA.) Were they . . . ?

DANA

(Raising his hands, shrugging, and sotto voce to KADEN.) Don't know.

There is a moment of silence as MARTY and GERRY disengage.

KADEN

(Conscious of the need for someone to speak.) Well. Is our TV star coming?

DANA

He said he might be late.

KADEN

You know, they asked me.

DANA

Actually I was surprised you weren't on.

KADEN

I decided my testimony was enough. My lawyer agreed.

DANA

I heard you had a liable suit going.

KADEN

True. I try not to think about it. You?

DANA

Nah. I like tennis and golf too much to spend time on anything like that. You know I finally got June to take golf lessons? We're actually playing together.

KADEN

Huh. Are you the typical husband, advising her on every shot?

DANA

(Smiling.) It's hard, but I try to keep my mouth shut.

KADEN

I tried to do that at work, but—

LEE strides briskly in, speaking, and heads straight for the food table. As he talks he eats a couple of small items and pours himself some wine.

LEE

Sorry I'm late. Had an agent meeting that ran over.

KADEN goes to LEE and hugs him as she speaks.

KADEN

Agent? Well, excuse me.

LEE

Ridiculous isn't it? An old fart like me.

They break apart.

KADEN

(Consciously setting up a joke.) How long have we known each other?

LEE

(Ready for it.) Since the first week of the McKinley administration.

KADEN

Right . . .

LEE

You were lucky. If Glo-Zar hadn't hired you, you might have been there when he got shot.

KADEN

That's why you need an agent. To do stand-up.

LEE

Ha.

MARTY

You should get Dana to coach you. Improve your timing.

LEE

I never noticed that Dana was—*(double-taking at MARTY and going to shake his hand)* why, Marty, you young fool, it's nice to see you.

MARTY

(Smiling) Likewise, Lee.

LEE

And hello, Gerry. We never got to speak much, something I'll always regret.

GERRY

(Acknowledging him from distance, smiling at the compliment.) Me too, Lee. I always heard that you never bullshit.

LEE

And I'm not starting now, believe me. *(Turning to DANA with outstretched hand, which DANA takes.)* But speaking of Dana.

DANA

Weren't you already about sixty when McKinley was sworn in?

LEE

You're off by a hundred.

DANA

So, what do you do when you're not doing interviews?

LEE

Meet with lawyers. Help lawyers prepare materials. Fend off lawyers who want in on the case. Oh, and respond to the press, god help me. When I'm not on airplanes.

KADEN

So you're already traveling. Why not join me and combine it with consulting?

LEE

Why would I do that? I owe Bob for freeing me from informing people who don't want to be informed.

MARTY

And appearing on Sixty Minutes is different?

LEE

A good question, my young friend. When I decided to do that, I thought it might help put those malefactors into cells where they belong.

KADEN

Still might.

LEE

Doubtful.

DANA

But you persist.

LEE

The thing has a momentum of its own. If I stop now they'll say I've caved.

KADEN

And you'd care?

LEE

When the public's been watching you . . .

DANA

Tough being a celebrity. Teenage girls begging for your autograph.

LEE

It's the stink. Hard to get rid of, even when you've done the right thing. If you deviate just a little people start sniffing you again.

KADEN

True. They still sniff me.

DANA

Really? Even after your blaze of glory?

KADEN

I still get the questions. If you were there, you can never shake that odor.

MARTY

And you did the right thing. Try doing the wrong thing.

Everyone turns to look at MARTY. Nobody speaks.

MARTY (CONTINUED)

Well, that's what I did.

DANA

Marty, nobody holds anything against you.

MARTY

Sure you do. I can tell by how you look at me.

DANA

You did what you had to do.

MARTY

I did what I did. There was no had-to about it.

DANA

Hey, I didn't bring everyone here for mea culpas, of which we all have a few, I would say. I just thought we could all sort of catch up and have some laughs.

KADEN

We were all under incredible pressure. I can't second guess anyone.

MARTY

But in my case you don't have to.

DANA

Marty, dwelling on it won't help.

MARTY

You're right about that, which is why I try not to think about it more than twice a day.

GERRY

You shouldn't beat yourself up, Marty.

MARTY

(To GERRY) Remember when you said I did a complete reversal and didn't even try to justify it? You were spot on.

GERRY

You don't have to explain.

DANA

Marty, you had personal stresses. Money, Beth out of work and about to deliver.

MARTY

Yeah, well. One item's off that list.

DANA

What do you mean?

MARTY

Beth.

Silence as they wait for MARTY to explain.

MARTY (CONTINUED)

I can't say I blame her. Looking back on those months, when I wasn't justifying myself I was begging her to do it for me.

GERRY

But you were supporting her.

MARTY

Oh, she was grateful for that, she's a reasonable and kind person. But I was hard to take and it got to be too much for her.

DANA

That's terrible, Marty.

MARTY

She got a job. A good one, too. No smell on her. She's doing well. And one good thing, I get to see our son a lot, between cabinet jobs.

DANA

No substitute for that.

MARTY

He's great. I'm doing a lot of child care and I love it, but . . .

KADEN

But what?

MARTY

Dana, how do you tell your kids what happened?

DANA

One of my kids is in graduate school and the other one—

MARTY

How do you explain what you did?

KADEN

Marty, I don't think that's your business.

MARTY

(His anger starting to show) Dana was always giving advice. I thought maybe he could help me here, because someday my son will be old enough to ask and I won't know how to answer.

KADEN

He tells them that he put them through college.

MARTY

And that works? That satisfies them?

DANA

I tell them I thought I could do more good by staying than by leaving.

MARTY

And they believe it?

KADEN

Marty, you have no right—

MARTY

(Anger mounting) I don't, but I'm asking anyway.

DANA

If this is about the times you were left hanging in front of the donor reps—

MARTY

No, it's not about that. You couldn't have done anything—

DANA

Then what is it, Marty? For five years you got nothing but support from me. I publicly praised you when you did good and backed you when you screwed up.

MARTY

And told me to get along. Keep your head down, shuffle papers, don't attract attention, and—

KADEN

Marty—

MARTY

—don't expect to get paid by angels.

DANA

What was wrong with that? It kept you working.

MARTY

(Emphatically) I sold out. And so did you.

Beat. Silence.

DANA

Is that what everybody thinks?

Silence.

KADEN

I think you're over-dramatizing it, Marty.

MARTY

Am I? Glo-Zar was doing good things, right? We weren't perfect, but we were helping people. And then along comes Bob and turns everything upside down. *(To Dana.)* Did you really think you could stop it?

KADEN

(Defending DANA, to MARTY) You, apparently, embraced it.

MARTY

I had to justify staying, so yeah, I tried to convince myself that maybe those guys had something. Maybe we'd been doing things the same way for so long that we couldn't think of anything else. I thought, why shouldn't we compete, instead of always cooperating? Maybe we could help more people by being a little more aggressive. Like Woody said, maybe it was time to think outside the box.

LEE

If you're telling us you fell victim to a cliché, then you really are a fool.

MARTY

I'm worse than a fool, I'm a collaborator. I carried water for this corporate Mussolini. I defended him in public. But what about you, Dana?

GERRY

Is it just about blame, Marty?

MARTY

Not blame. Dana's not to blame for what I did. I'm just trying to understand.

DANA

Don't try so hard, Marty. Sometimes things don't make sense.

MARTY

When I look in the mirror there's a word hanging in the air between me and the face looking back at me. You know what that word is, Dana? Morality. I thought I had it, but I didn't, and neither did you.

DANA

Okay, just to be clear, I never encouraged you to do anything wrong or dishonest.

MARTY

(Defeated for now.) No, you didn't.

DANA

And what you were accused of—

MARTY

I did not do. I denied it under oath and the evidence supports me.

DANA

I know that.

KADEN

You want to talk morality, Marty? I hear about it all the time from my family. While I was being so damn moral about the big things, why didn't I save some of it for them? What would be so immoral about that?

MARTY

But you don't have to explain—

KADEN

I have to explain why my income is a fraction of what it was. To the folks who depend on it, that's a moral failure.

MARTY

I have to explain both—going along and losing a big pay check.

LEE

The young fool has posed some interesting questions, Dana.

KADEN

Lee, please.

DANA

No, Lee's right.

LEE

(To DANA, with righteous heat.) I think you planned this party as a forum where everyone else would confess and make you feel better, and you'd stay above it all, like you always do.

KADEN

Lee, stop—

LEE

I don't work for you anymore, Kaden.

KADEN

(Laughs.) So that's it? Out from under my thumb?

DANA

I didn't expect confessions from anyone.

LEE

What then? You thought we'd all laugh about that Christmas party three years ago and move on to our favorite teams?

DANA

I don't know.

LEE

Then what did you think we'd talk about, Dana?

For the next several lines, they talk on top of each other.

DANA

I didn't—

LEE

(An accusation) You colluded, Dana.

DANA

I tried—

KADEN

What about you, Lee?

LEE

Me? I'm the one who exposed—

KADEN

Have you told everyone how you made up reports for them—

LEE

Without me there would be no case—

KADEN

Lee, you concocted numbers—

LEE

—They wanted bullshit. What I did was clerical.

KADEN

—and you left your name off them, which you never told Sixty Minutes.

DANA

(Loudly enough to silence the others.) It doesn't matter, does it? You couldn't be there without getting dirty.

Silence.

DANA

(A confession) In my first meeting with Bob he blew up and ranted for about fifteen minutes about something I said, and what did I do? Nothing. Ever since, I fantasize about telling him off and stalking out, like Kaden. But I didn't. I just waited for the storm to finish. And then, privately, Woody gave me his standard warning about loyalty. I had lots of chances to quit, but I was tired and didn't want to go job hunting. I became Woody's clerk. And just before the total collapse, I retired, as quietly as I could. If that's collusion, then I guess I'm guilty.

Beat.

MARTY

That's what you tell your kids?

DANA

I tell them things were out of my control.

MARTY

Do they buy it?

DANA

I think so. *(Catches himself)* No, they don't. And the questions vary but they're always the same. Why did you stay? Why did you hang around after things were obvious? How could you work for that creep?

KADEN

Ingrates.

DANA

No, they're not ingrates. They're just—

KADEN

Wait until they're out in the wonderful world of work for a few years. They'll get it.

DANA

Not sure I want them to. Maybe if I'd had your *(KADEN's)* courage and come up short of college money, they would have been happier. *(Changing the subject, to GERRY.)* But you came out okay, didn't you?

GERRY

Me?

KADEN

You got out clean.

GERRY

Before I quit I let them take my proposal, and my reports, and abuse them. Secretly I felt flattered. If Woody hadn't hit on me I might not have quit.

Everyone else takes a moment to digest what for them is new information.

KADEN

Good lord.

GERRY

I got out before the final collapse, but it hasn't helped me much. Sometimes I wish I'd done what Dana did.

KADEN

You got another job.

GERRY

I'm a fucking secretary. That's the best I could get, and even at that I'm on probation.

KADEN

I'd put in a word and I'm sure Dana—

GERRY

(Ignoring KADEN.) And job hunting? All jerks. All of them. They would shake their heads about my resignation, tell me nobody wants to hire a quitter, and in the next breath they'd wonder how I stayed as long as I did. It's like they expected me to rise through the ranks and take over the company and kick the bad guys out and make everything great, like in some stupid movie. If I'd stayed and shuffled paper I might not be any worse off.

Silence.

LEE

This has been fun.

KADEN

If only those assholes would go to jail.

LEE

Forget it. Once the lawyers get into the weeds the juries and the judges get confused and that's the end of it.

Silence.

MARTY

I have some cabinets to install tomorrow.

LEE

And I have a plane to catch tonight.

MARTY

Thanks, Dana.

DANA

I'm sorry. I expected fun.

MARTY

Gerry, want to walk out with me?

GERRY

(After a moment.) I don't think so, Marty. I'm sorry.

MARTY

Yeah. Everybody's sorry. *(Looking around the room.)* Kaden. Lee.

MARTY exits.

LEE

Kaden, we should get together again some time.

KADEN

Right, before the next flood.

LEE

I'll have to dust off my cubit conversion algorithm. Thanks, Dana, for this *(Gesturing at the room)*, whatever it was. Gerry, I'm sure you'll be climbing the ladder.

LEE exits.

DANA

Well, here I am with all this food and wine.

GERRY

I'm sure June would like it.

DANA

Sure.

GERRY

You were a good boss, Dana.

DANA

I . . .

GERRY

I mean it. You were. Supportive, positive, all those good things.

DANA

Thanks. You were good too. Managing you and Marty was easy.

GERRY

And you taught me about timing.

DANA

(Smiling.) It's all-important.

GERRY exits.

DANA watches her leave. He looks at the food table.

DANA

(To KADEN, wistfully, one old friend to another.) On the way out, please help yourself to a pastry. Some Fruit. Coffee. Wine. Just like always.

DANA and KADEN regard each other.

Blackout.

End of Play

Setting Details

The stage has eight areas, listed below. Each area needs its own lighting. To keep the pace up, set changes should be avoided, except for the bar scene and the restaurant party scene, listed below.

Each area requires only furniture, no walls. In each office the desk has minimal bric-a-brac—multi-line telephone, photo stands, a desk toy or two, etc.

To use the same office space for different owners (Dana's office becomes Woody's, and the same office area is used by both Kaden and Skylar), the bric-a-brac can be rearranged.

Each area needs its own light.

- Stage right, office: Dana's, later Woody's. Has a desk, an "executive" office chair, and a couple of guest chairs. (I: 2, 4, 8, 10, 13. II: 2, 4.)
- Stage left, office: Kaden's, also Skylar's. Same furnishings as the other office. (I: 1, 3, 4, 6, 10. II: 3, 4, 7, 9.)
- Downstage center: Presentation area. No furnishings. (I: 6, 7. II: 6.)
- Upstage center: Conference area. Has one rectangular table, a chair at one head, three chairs along its upstage side. White board on a stand. (I: 6, 7, 9, 12.)
- Downstage right: Loading dock, no furniture. (I: 5, 11. II: 10.)
- Downstage left: Loading dock, no furniture. (I: 5.)
- Downstage center: Bar, with a small table with two chairs, with a candle. This is and the following area are the two areas that require set changes. (II: 5.)
- Stage center: Restaurant party room. The conference table is now a buffet table, with a table cloth, trays of food, wine bottles, plates, cutlery, glasses, etc. The table and chairs from the bar are downstage somewhere. (II: 13.)

Costumes

Modern office casual.

Props

Two laptop computers (need not function or be plugged in).

Four cell phones (need not function).

Remote control unit.

White board markers and eraser.

Table cloth

Trays of food (mostly fake, only a couple of real items for actors to eat)

Two red wine bottles

Two white wine bottles

Water pitcher

Lemonade pitcher

10 glasses

Cutlery

Napkins

Sounds

Loading dock traffic noise.