

# 2

## Soft Targets

In December of 1991, I was working as the “Senior Manager of Consulting Services” at Multitrak Software Development Corporation. Business wasn’t great and senior management had “no choice” but to have layoffs. I was one of the people who got laid off.<sup>1</sup> I had been working on my masters degree in theater part time while still traveling a lot for work. This made working on theater productions very difficult. So being laid off opened up the space for me to shift to being a full time student and direct and act in productions. It also provided the raw stuff for the play *Soft Targets*. I wrote the second act first. It’s not my story, but it is a story of being laid off and of course in all the important ways it is my story—even though I wasn’t married at the time, I didn’t hang out with a homeless guy, I didn’t see sprites, and I didn’t go out looking for a new job. I wrote the first act when I was done with the second act because I felt like there was a need to tell the other side of the story, the story of the organizational leader who lays people off. Both

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<sup>1</sup>I tell the story of how I eventually came to understand the issues I had with being laid off in (Taylor 2004).

acts are meant to be able to stand alone as one act plays while also working together as a coherent two act play.

The first scene I wrote was the layoff scene. It was my way of trying to capture what it felt like by externalizing my inner experience. The rest of the play continues trying to externalize inner conflicts by using various devices, such as the sprites who sing polkas like Elvis Presley. These devices can make the play difficult to read, but in my experience they work well on stage.

As the play deals with layoffs (or downsizing or making people redundant or whatever we call firing people when money is tight), for me it also raises some bigger issues about organizations around individual agency and how we respond to systemic pressures. As you read, perform, and/or watch the play, you might think about some of these questions:

- What would happen if Bob refused to have layoffs?
- How much power does any individual have?
- Does the play have a happy ending?
- Do the characters act ethically?
- Do the organizations act ethically?
- How is the main characters' identity connected to their job?

## SOFT TARGETS

A Play in Two Acts



Donna Ladkin and Rupesh Shaw (*Soft Targets*, Art of Management and Organization Conference, London, UK 2002).

### Setting

The action takes place over a variety of places, which should be represented as simply as possible with a unit set. The set should emphasize the metaphors of the play, while allowing for a variety of playing spaces. Bob and Joe move from scene to scene, adding a coat, taking off a hat as needed. There should be no blackouts, instead there should be a sense that we are watching their journey. Extensive doubling can be used. Masks may be used for any and/or all of the minor characters.

Eight Person Casting Matrix

	Major Role	Masked
1st Male	<i>Bob</i>	Colonel Davis
2nd Male	Joe	<i>Schwinn</i>
3rd Male	<i>Smitty</i>	Sprite 3
		Butter
4th Male	Jones	<i>Chris</i>
		Simms
1st Female	Pam	Billings
		Cosway
2nd Female	<i>Patti</i>	<i>Wilson</i>
		1st Sprite
3rd Female	<i>Jenny</i>	Boss
		First
		Judy
4th Female	<i>Jodie</i>	Walker
		Sprite 2

Note Italics denote a character in Act I

Act I: The World Without

Cast of Characters

- Bob—President of B.A. Labs

Jenny—Bob’s daughter

Patti—Bob’s wife

Chris—Bob’s secretary

Jodie—an otherworldly being
- Wilson—Comptroller at B.A.

Smitty—A shoeshine guy

Schwinn—B.A. Board Member

Cosway—B.A. Board Member

*(Bob enters and stands at parade rest. Jodie enters and Bob snaps to attention. Jodie silently inspects Bob, ending with his shoes.)*

JODIE: Shoes.

*(Smitty enters. Jodie marches Bob to Smitty’s shoe shine chair and sits him in it. Jodie exits. Smitty shines Bob’s shoes as they talk.)*

- SMITTY: Hey, Mr. Parson. Whooeey, it's been a while for these shoes.
- BOB: Yeah, I got up this morning and I said to myself, those shoes just don't cut it.
- SMITTY: They sure don't look like a president's shoes.
- BOB: It's been a brutal quarter. I haven't had time for my shoes.
- SMITTY: You got to take care of your shoes. Nobody knows that better than you Mr. Parson. It was you told me a business man looks at another business man's shoes first thing. Before he even looks him in the eye, he looks at his shoes.
- BOB: Salesmen.
- SMITTY: Sure salesmen, too. They look at shoes more than just about any other thing. Salesmen, they come get their shoes done even before they feed themselves. Even before they have a drink some of them.
- BOB: You think so?
- SMITTY: They know it's all looks. They walk into a customer and try and sell him something and they got ratty-assed shoes on they know that customer ain't gonna buy a thing. Appearance. You look fine, you are fine. I work my butt off, get me a new suit and if I don't have a shine on my shoes, I can kiss any work good bye. You know that this ain't all I do. I'm selling products for the blind, too. Those blind folk make some good stuff, but if I don't have a shine on my shoes I'm not going to sell dollar one. No, sir. There you have a righteous shine, Mr. Parson. You go out and do anything with that shine.
- BOB: Thanks, Smitty.

*(Bob pays Smitty and goes to his office. Bob sits behind his desk, Jodie enters and relaxes in a visitor chair. Smitty exits.)*

- BOB: New world order.
- JODIE: Peace in Europe.
- BOB: Bad for business.
- JODIE: No war, no guns to sell.
- BOB: There will always be guns to sell.
- JODIE: Not so many guns.

BOB: There you are.  
JODIE: Lots of firms that want to sell them. Supply: up, up, up.  
Demand: down, down, down.  
BOB: Survival of the fittest.  
JODIE: The strong survive.  
BOB: The weak ....  
JODIE: Die like dogs.  
BOB: The strong ....  
JODIE: Eat their young if they have to.  
BOB: I don't want to eat my young.

*(Chris enters and speaks only to Bob.)*

CHRIS: Excuse me, Bob. You have some messages.  
BOB: Sure.  
CHRIS: George Williamson from Huge Aircraft called. He said that the latest round of cuts by the House Armed Services Committee means that they will not be able to second source the Pave Panther Project.  
JODIE: We can't afford to lose that contract.  
CHRIS: And James Darby called from Washington. He said he was having no luck at all.  
JODIE: What the hell do we pay lobbyists for?  
BOB: I pay Darby for results. *(Pause.)* Is that all?  
CHRIS: No. The latest edition of Aviation Leak suggests that the entire Paveway Five Low Cost Infrared Seeker program is going to be cancelled.  
BOB: Do they have good sources?  
CHRIS: It's not clear, but the technical information seems to be right on target.  
JODIE: If that goes we are in deep shit. Deep, deep shit.  
BOB: Get me a copy of the article and check out their sources. And get me our strategic file on Huge Aircraft. I'll figure out a way to get that contract.

*(Chris exits.)*

BOB: Save our young, eat their young.  
JODIE: It comes to that.  
BOB: Sure it does.  
JODIE: It has come to that.  
BOB: You think so?  
JODIE: New world order.  
BOB: Open your eyes and smell the roses.  
JODIE: As long as we smell them first.  
BOB: As long as we make sure they're our roses.  
JODIE: There you go.  
BOB: Eat their goddamn young.  
JODIE: Better than eating our young.  
BOB: Damn right.

*(Wilson enters.)*

WILSON: Quarterly financials. Yearly projection updates.  
BOB: Sit.  
WILSON: Grim. Backlog reduction of twenty five percent, nominal rate of expected return on investment of current advanced development projects reduced to three percent.  
BOB: Risk factor?  
WILSON: As high as seventy five percent in some scenarios.  
BOB: Shit!  
WILSON: Exactly.  
JODIE: Gloom and doom is everywhere,  
Financial cupboard's looking bare.  
BOB: What course of action are you suggesting?  
WILSON: Cost cutting. Basic austerity. Eliminate risk. Tighten our belt. Broaden our horizons. Diversify.  
JODIE: C-130 sitting on the strip.  
BOB: Airborne ranger gonna take a little trip.  
JODIE: And if my chute don't open wide.  
BOB: I've got another by my side.  
WILSON: We have to mitigate our risk.  
JODIE: And if that chute don't open, too.

- BOB: Look out world, I'm coming through.  
WILSON: Even radical cost cutting won't guarantee success.  
BOB: Bottom line?  
WILSON: Layoffs.  
BOB: Layoffs?  
WILSON: Massive.  
BOB: Wrong.  
JODIE: The strong survive.  
BOB: Layoffs are not the answer. The employees of this company are the company. Having layoffs is like bleeding yourself to get well.  
WILSON: So what do we do?  
BOB: You tell me.

*(Pause.)*

- WILSON: No layoffs?  
BOB: Full action plan. Cash flow management, alternate scenarios, the whole nine yards.  
WILSON: No layoffs?  
BOB: No. Layoffs are the easy answer. I want a creative solution that considers the best interests of our people as well as the interests of the firm. I want you to think of the staff as an asset not just a variable cost. We have invested heavily in our people over the years and I don't want to sacrifice that investment.

*(Wilson exits.)*

- JODIE: Ed Jacoby.  
BOB: Started work here the same day as me.  
JODIE: Still working down on the floor.  
BOB: Sure.  
JODIE: Don't want to lay off old Ed.  
BOB: Sure don't.  
JODIE: Ed would be amongst the first to go.



BOB: Sure. But I'm not going to lay off Ed. Not going to lay off anybody.

*(Patti and Jenny enter the living room. Bob and Jodie exit.)*

PATTI: How's the apartment hunting going?

JENNY: It's not.

PATTI: What's wrong?

JENNY: What's right?

PATTI: There must be some nice places out there somewhere.

JENNY: There's plenty of nice places. They cost more than I make in a month. I may not be an economist but I know that you can't pay more in rent than your gross monthly pay.

PATTI: You know that your father and I will help you out.

JENNY: We've been through this, Mom. I want to live on my own. On my own. Okay?

PATTI: There's nothing wrong with accepting a little help from your parents.

JENNY: I don't want to get into this again.

*(Pause.)*

PATTI: You just don't seem very happy these days.

JENNY: Happy? I live at home. I have no social life. I have a grunt job where I spend most of my time typing proposals and chasing stupid details with printers and mailing houses. It's the American dream.

PATTI: You can't expect to start at the top.

JENNY: Come on, Mom. I get enough of this crap from Dad.

*(Bob enters after a hard day at the office.)*

PATTI: Jenny and I were just talking about apartment hunting.

BOB: Did you find a place?

JENNY: I found lots of places. And they all cost too much.

BOB: We can help you out with that.

JENNY: You know how I feel about that, Dad.

BOB: If you change your mind...

JENNY: I know. It's just that things aren't exactly working out like I wanted them to.

BOB: Join the club. Things seldom work out quite like you want them to.

JENNY: That's not very comforting.

BOB: Right now it's the best I can do.

JENNY: Thanks, well I've got to go. I've got a shift down at the hotline.

PATTI: It's pretty late.

BOB: Maybe if you put more of your time into your real job -

JENNY: I put in a lot of time there.

PATTI: Won't you be awfully tired at work tomorrow.

JENNY: I'm supposed to be there in fifteen minutes.

BOB: Hard work is rewarded. Maybe a raise. Then you could afford your own place.

JENNY: The hotline is a good cause. It's important. (*Pause.*) I've gotta go.

*(Jenny exits.)*

BOB: She's so sure she's going to save the world all by herself.

PATTI: She's her father's daughter.

BOB: I don't remember ever having that much energy.

PATTI: You used to come home after work with lots of energy.

BOB: Yeah. Now all I want to do is sleep.

PATTI: Remember how you used to wake me up when you came home late?

BOB: Yeah.

PATTI: You used to start on my toes.

BOB: I did a lot of things back then.

PATTI: Maybe you should do some of them now.

BOB: Patti, I love you. But I really just want to try and get some sleep.

PATTI: Fine.

*(Jodie enters.)*

JODIE: You don't want to make love to your wife? When was the last time? What ever happened to that stud fighter pilot? That warrior hero. You know in some primitive cultures they kill the king if he fails to make love for a single night. Every single night. It's a sign of his fitness to rule. Come on, Bob. A real man knows how to keep his wife happy. If you can't get the job done in your bedroom how do you expect to be able to get the job done at work?

BOB: Leave me alone!

PATTI: I'm not touching you. I'm sorry I brought it up.

BOB: No, no. I'm sorry.

PATTI: You don't want to make love. Fine. Just go to sleep.

BOB: I wasn't talking to you.

PATTI: Bob, there's just the two of us here.

JODIE: You're getting in deeper and deeper.

BOB: I was having a dream about work.

PATTI: You were asleep and dreaming?

BOB: More of a day dream. I'm really tired and there's a lot going on at work and I can't get it off my mind.

PATTI: Do you want to talk about it?

BOB: I really just want to get some sleep.

PATTI: Fine.

JODIE: You blew that one.

*(Bob motions at Jodie. Jodie gestures back and moves away. Bob follows Jodie.)*

PATTI: Bob?

*(Patti exits.)*

BOB: Can't you stay at the office?

JODIE: How can you expect to get the job done there, if you're not getting the job done at home.

BOB: I don't want you here.  
JODIE: You can't separate the two.  
BOB: Get out of here. Now.  
JODIE: Whatever you say.

*(Jodie exits. Smitty enters. Bob goes to Smitty's shoe shine chair.)*

SMITTY: How you doing, Mr. Parson? Two days in a row.  
BOB: How are you?  
SMITTY: Not too good, Mr. Parson. Times get a little tight and first thing people do is start shining their own shoes. I can tell. I see shoes all day long and I can tell when someone shined those shoes themselves. A lot of amateur shines walking around this town. Shoes that I know. Shoes that I took care of, they walking around with amateur half-assed shines.  
BOB: Times are tough.  
SMITTY: You telling me.  
BOB: Maybe you need some creative new approach. Some marketing gimmick.  
SMITTY: What?  
BOB: Maybe a frequent shiner program. It could be like a frequent flyer program, but for shoe shines. Five shines and they get a shine free. Ten shines and they get a traveler's touch up kit.  
SMITTY: I don't know.  
BOB: You'd be the only shoe shine stand out there doing it. It could become a sort of status thing. "I'm a gold elite member of Smitty's shoe shine club." "Oh yeah, well I'm platinum."  
SMITTY: I'm not sure.  
BOB: You've got to look on these times as an opportunity to take business away from your competitors. It's a chance to crush them. There's fewer shoes to be shined and if you shine them, they don't.

SMITTY: I don't want to crush the other guys. They've got mouths to feed just like I do.

BOB: Don't you want to make it? Don't you want to succeed?

SMITTY: I don't know about all that success stuff. I got my life. My wife and I don't have a lot of things, but we got what we need. We got each other.

BOB: That's great, but wouldn't you like to be able to give her things?

SMITTY: She'd just get used to it and then she'd want more things. Sure I'd like to be rich like you Mr. Parson, but I'm not and I'm not going to be.

BOB: If you pushed a little, extended your hours. I see lots of business men coming through around seven, eight, even nine o'clock. Every shoeshine stand is closed after six.

SMITTY: Mr. Parson, how many times you sat down and spent the evening with your wife? Elaine and I have dinner together every night. I like that. I don't want to be working all night. What's the point of me working all night? I make some more money, but then I just buy Elaine something to make up for the fact that I didn't spend any time with her.

BOB: Maybe you have a point.

SMITTY: I mean all that working, that's okay for you. You like your job. You got one of those great big offices, a secretary. I shine shoes here. I break my back eight, nine, ten hours a day. I'm not going to break my back twelve, thirteen, fourteen hours a day. My back just can't take that.

BOB: I guess you're right.

SMITTY: Besides, Elaine would kick my butt all over the house if I missed one of her dinners.

*(Smitty finishes the shine, Bob pays him and goes to his office. Smitty exits. Jodie enters and sits in a visitor's chair. Wilson enters.)*

BOB: Wilson. How's the plan coming?

WILSON: Not good.  
BOB: What's the problem?  
WILSON: Bad numbers.  
BOB: Numbers are numbers. Not good. Not bad.  
WILSON: Conclusions still the same.  
JODIE: Same old same old.  
BOB: We need some vision.  
JODIE: A whole new B.A. Labs.  
WILSON: Numbers don't lie.  
BOB: It's up to you to make the numbers tell our story. Make the numbers tell a story of investment in people, a story of rebuilding B.A. Labs in the post-cold war era.  
WILSON: I don't think I'm that bold.  
BOB: The bold will grab the world by the balls.  
JODIE: The meek will find no balls to grab.  
WILSON: I don't know.  
BOB: Bolder than bold. With numbers. With projections. A realistic way to achieve our vision.  
WILSON: Our vision?  
JODIE: Bottom line.  
BOB: Let me put it this way.  
JODIE: You might be one of the casualties.  
BOB: I need an alternate plan that I can sell to the board, a plan that saves jobs, a plan that is backed up with numbers. I'll do the selling, you just have to do the numbers.  
WILSON: The new B.A. Labs?  
BOB: Neither of us want layoffs.  
WILSON: Restructure without layoffs.  
BOB: A real commitment to our people.  
WILSON: Our people are our future.  
BOB: So, you'll build the business case?  
WILSON: Yes. Yes, I will.  
BOB: Good numbers?  
WILSON: Great numbers!  
BOB: That's the spirit.

WILSON: Commitment to people. Investment in people. Our people are our future.

*(Wilson exits. Jodie exits. Pause. Jenny enters.)*

JENNY: Hi, Dad.

BOB: Hi, Jenny. What a pleasant surprise to see you here.

JENNY: I was out on my lunch hour and I happened to pass by your building.

BOB: I wish I had the time to have lunch with you.

JENNY: That's okay. I already ate.

BOB: So what's on your mind?

JENNY: I'm quitting my job.

BOB: Quitting your job?

JENNY: At the suicide hot line. Not my paying job.

BOB: Oh. Why?

JENNY: I can't take it anymore. I had to create another "morale booster" last night.

BOB: It'll give you more time for your "real" job.

JENNY: A lot of the staff, the volunteers, have been getting pretty depressed lately. When they get down, it comes right through to the callers. When you're suicidal the last thing you need is to talk to someone who's bummed out. It just doesn't feel like things have been working lately. There's no real way that you can tell if things are working, but you sort of get a feeling for whether you're doing any good or not. There's been a lot of "not" recently.

BOB: What makes you say that?

JENNY: Somebody gets a call and the caller tells them that they just took some pills. As they talk they slowly drift away until finally the phone goes dead and there's nobody there. It really rips up the volunteer. These people volunteer because they care.

BOB: Just like you, honey.

JENNY: Anyway I had to put up a sign last night that there has been a prank caller who calls and then fires a cap gun into the phone and drops the receiver.

BOB: Uh, huh.

JENNY: There hasn't been any prank caller. I remember seeing them put up the same message right after I first started. I can't do this anymore.

BOB: You don't have to. You've done this for a long time. You've helped a lot of people. Nobody expects you to do it forever.

JENNY: I guess it will give me more time for my "real job".

BOB: Sure. It's time for you to move on, to get on with your career.

JENNY: Yeah, the wonderful world of the marketing assistant.

BOB: You won't always be a marketing assistant.

*(Jenny exits and Jodie enters.)*

JODIE: And if that chute don't open, too,  
Look out world, I'm coming through.

*(Jodie exits. Bob & Cosway meet in Cosway's office, where Cosway practices putting.)*

COSWAY: You familiar with Franco Modigliani? Got the Nobel prize in economics in 1985 for his theory of savings and investment. He said that when people make more money than they need to spend on things, they save or invest the difference. The sheer beauty of that. When you have more money than you need to spend, you save it.

BOB: Can't argue with that.

COSWAY: My responsibility is to our investors. They have more money than they need to spend right now, so they have invested in B.A. Labs. But they have invested far more than just their extra dollars. They have invested their trust. They have given us their confidence as well as their



money. And I, for one, believe that is the far greater investment.

*(Jodie enters.)*

JODIE: Drive for show and putt for dough.

*(Jodie looks at Bob waiting for him to respond. Bob tries to get rid of Jodie.)*

JODIE: Drive for show and putt for dough.  
COSWAY: So you can see it's not me that doesn't want to invest in the long haul. I'd love to play for the long term. But I have to act on behalf of the American people and frankly they just won't stand for that short term pain for long term gain routine. And you can't blame them. As smart investors, as true and honest players in the capital market they have to seek the best return on their investment they can.

JODIE: Drive for show and putt for dough.  
COSWAY: It's fine for people to make philosophic statements when there's no real cost, when two stocks are likely to perform the same, what the hell, invest with your heart. But if there's a big difference in return you've got to reward the market and go with the better return. It's just like golf, Bob. Drive for show and putt for dough.

*(Jodie looks at Bob in disgust and exits.)*

COSWAY: You're an investor, Bob. Would you invest in a company that has said it's not going to even try and make money for a couple of years in the interest of saving jobs and long term viability? Of course you wouldn't. You'd invest in the other companies that are trying to make money. That's why you're investing your money in the first place.

BOB: Don't you think we're shooting ourselves in the foot? I mean, American people, the American investor.

COSWAY: Perhaps. But what's the other choice? Not to shoot at all?  
BOB: That would be better than shooting yourself in the foot.  
COSWAY: If you don't play, you can't win. If you don't win, you lose the court. You don't get to play anymore.  
BOB: Maybe I don't want to play anymore.  
COSWAY: There's a lot of players lined up out there to use the court.  
BOB: Damn it, it's my court.  
COSWAY: You have to win to keep it.  
BOB: Yeah. Well we're not putting yet.  
COSWAY: We're about to. And if you don't sink the putt, you're going home alone.

*(Patti quietly enters her living room. Bob and Cosway exit. Jenny enters the living room.)*

PATTI: You're home late.  
JENNY: I had to work late.  
PATTI: Just like your father.  
JENNY: Not like dad. I had to work late because one of our receptionists quit and they decided not to replace her. So I am answering phones part of the day. But I still have all of my marketing work to do.

*(Pause.)*

PATTI: I'm sure it's just temporary.  
JENNY: We all have to pitch in in these difficult economic times. My manager gave me that line.  
PATTI: It's true. A little sacrifice is a good thing.  
JENNY: I don't see my manager answering phones.  
PATTI: I'm sure your manager is making sacrifices.  
JENNY: Yeah, right. My manager is doing what all managers do and letting it all flow downhill. And who's sitting at the bottom of that hill? Me.  
PATTI: You can't expect to start at the top.

JENNY: I don't. I started as a receptionist. I moved up to being marketing slave. Which is only marginally above receptionist. But it is above answering phones. I don't want to move downwards.

PATTI: Are you happy with the marketing work?

JENNY: Sure. It's not great, but I'm learning things.

PATTI: So just think of answering phones part time as the price you have to pay for working in marketing.

JENNY: I want my career to go forward, not backwards.

PATTI: Worthwhile things do not come without cost.

JENNY: I don't need a course in moral philosophy, I need to not spend half my day answering phones and then be expected to still get a full days marketing work done.

*(Bob enters. Pause.)*

BOB: What a day. I just had a chat with one of the board members. It's clear that my butt is on the line.

PATTI: I'm sorry to hear that.

JENNY: Don't worry. I'll take care of the family if you lose your job. I got promoted at work. I'm doing my job and the receptionist's job. Isn't that great? I bet you could do that at B.A. Labs and it would take care of all your problems. Just give all your employees a second job, but only pay them for one. And then you could get rid of half of them. Think of the savings.

BOB: I'm not going to get rid of anyone.

PATTI: How will that sit with the board?

BOB: Not very well.

PATTI: They want layoffs?

BOB: It's the safe, conservative decision. It's the clear winner in the short run.

PATTI: What will they do if you don't have layoffs?

BOB: If I don't have layoffs and don't convince them that I do have a better plan, then they'll fire me.

JENNY: Here's an idea. If you want to save money, just pay people less. It's the same thing as giving them more work to do. The effective hourly wage goes down. You might not get much from the guys in the mail room, but think how much you can save by cutting executive salaries.

PATTI: I don't think your father wants to hear this right now.

BOB: No. Go ahead.

JENNY: I'm sorry, Dad. It just seems like management always makes decisions about the little guys without ever talking to us about it. And when things go south, it's the little guys who suffer.

BOB: And that's not fair.

JENNY: No it's not fair. It's business.

BOB: It sure is.

PATTI: Don't do anything stupid, Bob.

BOB: Stupid? I'll try not to.

PATTI: You have that look. I know that look.

BOB: What look?

PATTI: That stubborn, righteous look. That you're going to do whatever it is you want to do regardless of what happens look.

BOB: Oh, that look.

*(Bob exits. Patti and Jenny exit to the kitchen. Cosway and Schwinn enter the boardroom. Bob enters the boardroom. Jodie follows and watches from the side.)*

BOB: I'm sure you've seen the quarterly numbers.

COSWAY: Looked grim.

SCHWINN: Very grim.

BOB: And we are projecting an operating loss for next quarter.

COSWAY &

SCHWINN: Operating loss?

- BOB: The cutbacks in defense spending are going to hurt us. There's nothing we can do about that in the short term.
- JODIE: Bob! Bob! He's our man, if he can't do it nobody can!
- BOB: I am currently working on a variety of options for the long run.
- JODIE: Two bits, four bits, six bits, a dollar! All for Bob stand up and holler!
- COSWAY: We have a lot of confidence in you, Bob.
- SCHWINN: But we'll have to look twice at the idea of operating losses.
- BOB: Our backs are against the wall. We're down but we're not out. I think we can look upon these tough times as an opportunity to show the world what kind of company we are.
- JODIE: We've got spirit, yes we do. We've got spirit, how 'bout you?
- BOB: I believe that we are a company that believes in it's people. We believe our people are our greatest asset and that we are nothing without our people.
- COSWAY: It's a good pitch.
- SCHWINN: But we'll need to examine the numbers.
- COSWAY: Weigh the evidence.
- SCHWINN: Consider the business cases.
- COSWAY: Reflect on the interests of our stockholders.
- SCHWINN: And ourselves.
- JODIE: Hit 'em again! Harder! Harder!
- BOB: It's a time for bold steps. Let's take them.
- COSWAY: And what are those steps?
- SCHWINN: How are you going to cut costs?
- BOB: There's no single answer. We'll have to cut operating costs across the board.
- SCHWINN: Layoffs?
- BOB: No. I think that we can reduce salaries across the board and not have to lay anyone off.
- COSWAY: Interesting idea.
- SCHWINN: We'll be looking forward to seeing your plan.

*(Cosway & Schwinn exit.)*

JODIE: What's our mighty battle cry?

BOB: "V"

JODIE: "I" - "C"

BOB: "T" - "O" - "R" - "Y"

*(Jodie exits. Smitty enters. Bob goes to Smitty's shoeshine stand.)*

SMITTY: You're looking pretty happy today, Mr. Parson.

BOB: I am. I think the board bought my plan. And it's a pretty good plan if I do say so myself.

SMITTY: What's it a plan for?

BOB: It's a plan to build a new B.A. Labs. Congress is cutting defense spending and that poses some serious problems for us.

SMITTY: So you're going to have layoffs.

BOB: No. My plan doesn't include any layoffs.

SMITTY: No?

BOB: Sure, there's going to be pain. And there's going to be cost cutting. There'll be across the board salary cuts.

SMITTY: Everybody's going to take a pay cut?

BOB: It's better than having layoffs.

SMITTY: They tell you that?

BOB: Who?

SMITTY: The workers. They say that pay cuts are better than layoffs?

BOB: I haven't talked to them yet.

SMITTY: Maybe you should walk a mile in their shoes before you speak for them.

*(Bob stands and Smitty rises. Bob motions Smitty to sit in the chair, which Smitty does. Bob kneels and starts to shine Smitty's shoes.)*

SMITTY: That's not exactly what I meant.

BOB: It doesn't seem that different from here.

SMITTY: Okay. Let's look at the whole picture. You live from paycheck to paycheck.

BOB: No savings at all?

SMITTY: You missed a spot there. Maybe you got some savings. Not much.

BOB: I can tighten my belt.

SMITTY: It's already tight.

BOB: But it's better than losing my job.

SMITTY: Maybe I'm not going to lose my job. I've got seniority. Maybe the rest of my bowling team is going to lose their job.

BOB: So I won't have a bowling team, but at least I'll still have my job.

SMITTY: First things first.

BOB: But if I lose my job.

SMITTY: We find somebody to take your place on the bowling team. Get a little more around the back.

BOB: But if we all took a pay cut then...

SMITTY: None of us could afford to bowl.

BOB: And what's life without bowling?

SMITTY: You keep shining like that and you won't get no tips. No offense Mr. Parson, but you are not a shoe shine man.

*(Smitty stands, Bob stands and pays Smitty.)*

BOB: I guess not.

*(Smitty exits. The Masseuse and Schwinn enter Schwinn's office. Schwinn lays on a table being massaged. Bob moves near Schwinn.)*

SCHWINN: I don't give a flying fuck about the shareholder. John Q. Public gets what he deserves. Investing in the stock market is a crap shoot. You place your bet you take your chances. We have to run the company the best way we know how.

- BOB: I appreciate your saying that.
- SCHWINN: Why did you ask me to be on your board of directors, Bob? You could have asked any one in the world, but you asked me. Why?
- BOB: Respect.
- SCHWINN: Respect?
- BOB: I respect your opinion. You're a straight shooter. You've never bullshitted me. I want you at my back when the shit hits the fan.
- SCHWINN: I appreciate your saying that.
- BOB: It's true.
- SCHWINN: So I know you're going to appreciate the truth I'm about to tell you. I'm not going to lie to you, Bob. I've been taking a good hard look at B.A. Labs. What I see is not pretty. I see fat. I see waste. I see inefficiency. I see good things as well. I see people who care, but I also see people who don't give a shit. I see bureaucracy that has become a thing unto itself, a beast that is only concerned with feeding itself and no longer serves the greater whole. Do you hear me, Bob?
- BOB: I hear you. And I have to admit that it's there.
- SCHWINN: That's why you have to have layoffs. It takes radical surgery to eliminate cancer. You need a shock to the system.
- BOB: There's good people out there that will be hurt. Hurt badly.
- SCHWINN: You have to take out some of the good flesh to make sure that you get all of the bad. You can't leave any of the tumor. And the end result is a healthy body.
- BOB: Or a dead one.
- SCHWINN: Lie down here a second, Bob.

*(Schwinn stands and Bob takes his place on the table. The masseuse works on Bob.)*

- SCHWINN: It's like getting a massage. Feels good doesn't it?



BOB: Yeah.

SCHWINN: But to really work, to really do you some good, it takes a little more than that.

*(Jodie enters and takes the Masseuse's place, who exits, unknown to Bob, and starts to work Bob over. Bob groans in pain.)*

SCHWINN: You see? You see what I'm talking about?

*(Bob tries to answer, but can only make noises because of the pain Jodie is causing him.)*

SCHWINN: What you've got to do is just relax into it. The pain is good. Just go with it, accept it and let it take you away. Let it heal you.

*(Bob screams as Jodie tortures him.)*

SCHWINN: You're getting the idea now. That's my boy.

*(Schwinn exits and Jodie stops torturing Bob. Bob catches his breath and turns and sees that it was Jodie. Jodie smiles and exits. Bob goes to his office. Wilson enters.)*

WILSON: I've been working out more numbers on the re-training program.

BOB: More numbers?

WILSON: Costs for skills testing, re-training, counseling, benefits, etc. while being trained versus severance costs.

BOB: It's more.

WILSON: There's physical plant costs, overhead, staff to conduct the re-training, consultants to determine the best re-training approaches.

BOB: Sure.

WILSON: It's more than expensive.

*(Jodie enters. Bob and Jodie are in Vietnam.)*

JODIE: Sir. It's Westerfield.

BOB: What?

JODIE: Westerfield didn't make it.

BOB: The rest of the squad?

JODIE: All here. Walette took a round in the shoulder. He says he thinks Westerfield may have been hit in the leg.

BOB: Damn it. You stay here with Walette. The rest of us will go back for Westerfield.

JODIE: It's too hot.

BOB: Are you telling me what to do sergeant?

JODIE: We barely got out of there alive. If you go back in, you won't get back out.

BOB: We can't just leave him.

JODIE: You'll lose the whole squad if you go in now.

BOB: But he might still be alive.

JODIE: I know.

*(Bob is back in the office.)*

WILSON: The retraining effort is going to cost a lot more than a reduction in force would cost. Even considering the costs of hiring and training down the road.

BOB: We have a commitment to our people.

WILSON: The cost is prohibitive.

BOB: Figure out a way to make it work.

*(Bob is back in Vietnam.)*

JODIE: You'll lose the whole squad. It's not going to do Westerfield any good to get everyone else killed.

BOB: I can't just leave him there to die.

JODIE: He's probably already been captured.

BOB: You don't know that.

JODIE: No I don't. He might already be dead.

BOB: I can't leave him. I'm going in after him. I don't leave wounded men to die in the jungle. Not if I can help it.  
JODIE: It's a suicide mission.  
BOB: Maybe. Maybe we won't make it back. But I can't abandon him.

*(Bob is back in the office.)*

WILSON: I've run the numbers every way I can.  
BOB: Find some savings. Find a way to make this work. Or I'll find someone who can. Is that clear?  
WILSON: There's only so much I can do.  
BOB: Is that clear?  
WILSON: Yes. That's clear.

*(Wilson exits.)*

JODIE: No quarter asked. None given.  
BOB: I'm not asking.  
JODIE: Westerfield knew that going in.  
BOB: Take no prisoners?  
JODIE: If that's what it takes.  
BOB: Shoot the wounded?  
JODIE: We all knew the risks, we all knew the situation.  
BOB: And we all knew that we had each other.

*(Patti quietly enters. Jodie exits. Bob goes home.)*

PATTI: It's about time.  
BOB: I'm sorry. I should have called.  
PATTI: It's okay. I waited until the meal I had prepared was cold. Then I ate what I wanted and I gave the rest to the dog. You're welcome to check the dog's dish and see if there's any left.  
BOB: I'm not very hungry.  
PATTI: Fine.

- BOB: I'm really sorry. I was working on the presentation I have to make tomorrow to the board. It's the final pitch on what I'm going to do to keep B.A. Labs alive.
- PATTI: Fine.
- BOB: How was your day?
- PATTI: Fine.
- BOB: Just fine? Anything interesting happen?
- PATTI: One of my students came in with a tape of Beethoven's Fifth and wanted to learn to play it on his third piano lesson ever.
- BOB: Hmmm.
- PATTI: Hmmm?
- BOB: So what did you do?
- PATTI: I crushed his hopes. I may have put out the spark of creative genius in him forever. I taught him Mary Had a Little Lamb.
- BOB: Did he like that?
- PATTI: He loved it.
- BOB: That's good. *(Pause.)* Jenny didn't make it home for dinner?
- PATTI: No. She didn't call, either.
- BOB: You think she's okay?
- PATTI: I don't know.
- BOB: After tomorrow, I'll have the whole weekend free. No work. Just the two of us. Or the three of us if Jenny is around.
- PATTI: If Jenny isn't laying dead in the roadside somewhere.
- BOB: Don't say things like that.

*(Jenny enters, having had a couple of drinks. Jodie follows her in.)*

- PATTI: Nice of you to show up.
- JENNY: Hi, mom. Dad.
- BOB: Where have you been? Why didn't you call?
- PATTI: Shut up, Bob.
- JENNY: I've been out having a couple of drinks with the other losers.
- BOB: You're not a loser.

- JENNY: On the contrary. We had layoffs at work today. They laid off all the losers. And I was one of the losers.
- JODIE: Looks like they ate your young. How's it feel?
- PATTI: Oh, Jenny. Are you okay?
- JENNY: I'm great. No more answering phones. No more marketing slave. I'm free, free. Free at last.
- JODIE: Look's like there's a little left. If you hurry you can have what's left of your young for dessert.
- PATTI: You must feel horrible.
- JENNY: Actually, I feel pretty good.
- BOB: Eat my young!
- JENNY: Dad?
- BOB: They can't do this to you. I won't let them.
- JENNY: Dad. It's no big deal. Actually I'm glad they laid me off. Saves me the trouble of quitting.
- PATTI: You're sure you're okay about this?
- JENNY: Sure. Some of the people who got laid off were really depressed. One guy, his wife is pregnant and now he's going to have to pay for his own health care and he won't have a paycheck. And severance pay was minimal.
- JODIE: She doesn't look like anybody's lunch.
- BOB: Lunch?
- PATTI: Your father's had a tough week. Is there anything I can get you? A cup of coffee?
- JENNY: I could go for some dessert.
- BOB: You're not dessert.
- PATTI: There's some pie.
- JENNY: Apple? With vanilla ice cream?
- PATTI: Sure.
- JODIE: Life goes on.
- PATTI: Let's go in the kitchen.

*(Patti and Jenny exit.)*

- BOB: They ate my daughter.
- JODIE: She's nobody's lunch.

BOB: She's nobody's lunch.  
JODIE: If you're lunch, you're lunch. And having a job or not isn't going to make any difference.  
BOB: And Jenny is not lunch.  
JODIE: She's nobody's lunch.

*(Patti enters.)*

PATTI: What is wrong with you, Bob?  
BOB: They ate my daughter for lunch. And she's nobody's lunch.  
JODIE: She's not lunch.  
PATTI: No one ate your daughter. She got laid off, but she'll be fine.  
BOB: Laid off. Layoffs. Not at B.A. Labs.  
PATTI: They will fire you if you don't have layoffs.  
JODIE: Don't eat your young. Better to eat your own leg than eat your young.  
BOB: I'm not going to have layoffs.  
PATTI: They will fire you and bring in someone else and they'll have layoffs.  
JODIE: Don't be a cannibal.  
PATTI: You can't do this. You're sacrificing yourself for no reason. You won't be saving anyone's job.  
BOB: I can't do it.  
JODIE: The strong survive.  
PATTI: You're not just sacrificing yourself. What about the rest of your family?  
JODIE: Eat yourself and leave your young for the enemy to eat.  
BOB: Look at Jenny. Look what they did to her. I can't do that to my people.  
PATTI: Your daughter is in the kitchen having pie and ice cream.  
JODIE: Life goes on.  
BOB: Just toss them aside like yesterday's newspaper. Used up. Discarded?  
PATTI: It's going to be done. Don't make yourself one of the casualties.  
JODIE: The weak die like dogs.

BOB: The strong survive.  
PATTI: So be strong. Do what has to be done. Nobody wants to have layoffs. I don't want you to lay off your people.  
JODIE: The strong eat their young. (*Pause.*) If they have to.  
PATTI: Do your own dirty work.  
BOB: Have layoffs?  
PATTI: Yes.  
BOB: Face the music.  
PATTI: Yes. (*Pause.*) You want some pie?  
BOB: Yes.

(*Patti exits.*)

JODIE: And if my chute don't open wide.  
I've got another by my side.  
And if that chute don't open, too,  
Look out world, I'm coming through.

(*Bob and Jodie exit. Cosway & Schwinn enter the boardroom. Bob enters.*)

BOB: Members of the board. I'd like to present a plan for completely restructuring B.A. Labs. A plan for building the B.A. Labs of the future.  
COSWAY: Cut to the chase.  
SCHWINN: How big a loss are we talking about?  
BOB: It's significant, but we are going to do everything we can to minimize that loss.

(*Jodie enters.*)

COSWAY: Layoffs?  
SCHWINN: Cut the fat?

(*Jodie twists Bob's arms until he speaks.*)

BOB: Yes, there will be layoffs. Due to the forecasted reduction in business we will have fifteen percent layoffs across the board.

COSWAY: Stock prices will go up.

SCHWINN: Fifteen percent should get rid of most of the fat.

COSWAY: Good move, Bob.

SCHWINN: We're behind you all the way on this.

BOB: We will also aggressively pursue non-defense new business opportunities.

*(Jodie sends Bob sprawling between Cosway and Schwinn.)*

COSWAY: I'm sure we can find some money for that.

SCHWINN: You've got to spend money to make money.

*(Cosway and Schwinn help Bob up and carry him off as they talk. Jodie follows them off.)*

COSWAY: I think this is going to work out just fine.

SCHWINN: You've really proved your abilities as a chief executive officer, Bob.

*(Smitty fades in. Jenny enters and sits at Smitty's shoeshine stand.)*

SMITTY: How you doing today?

JENNY: Pretty good. Do a real good job with those shoes, I'm on my way to a job interview. Could be a whole new career.

SMITTY: You're young. You got good shoes, you got lots of careers left in you.

JENNY: How many careers have you had?

SMITTY: I just had jobs. Never had a career.

JENNY: I'd be happy if this would just be a new job.

SMITTY: Pretty tough time to be looking for a job.

JENNY: Sure is.



- SMITTY: With those layoffs at B.A. Labs and all those other places there's a lot of people out looking.
- JENNY: Sure are. I'm lucky just to get an interview.
- SMITTY: I'll make sure your shoes are looking good. So good they'll have to hire you.
- JENNY: You think that's what it takes?
- SMITTY: Don't hurt.
- JENNY: I hope you're right. You know my Dad says it's real important to have a good shine on your shoes.
- SMITTY: Sounds like a smart man, your Dad. There you go. Shine like that and you'll want to dance on into that interview.
- JENNY: I don't think that would help me get the job.
- SMITTY: You dance the dance that's in your heart. You do that and nothing's going to stop you.
- JENNY: Thanks.

*(Jenny pays Smitty and exits. Smitty counts his money and shakes his head looking for more customers as it fades to black.)*

## Act II: The Polka Within

### Cast of Characters

- |  |                                     |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| Joe—a middle manager                     | Jones—a street person               |
| First Lieutenant—junior military officer | Butter Bars—junior military officer |
| Colonel—high ranking military officer    | Boss—Joe's boss at B.A. Labs        |
| Pam—Joe's wife                           | Davis—an employer                   |
| Billings—a potential employer            | Judy—Joe's daughter, age 4          |
| 3 Sprites—playful otherworld beings      | Walker—lawn mower engineer          |
|  | Simms—a Headmaster                  |

*(First Lieutenant, Butter Bars and the Colonel are in the briefing room. Jones, a shabbily dressed man, begs for money on the street. Joe walks down the city street.)*

JONES: Can you help me out, pal?

*(Joe avoids eye contact with Jones and walks past him.)*

JONES: Thanks. Have yourself a nice day.

*(Joe enters the briefing room and sits in the audience.)*

FIRST: So the Paveway Five Low Cost Infrared Seeker will be a marked improvement in cost per kill in the interdiction role. Low production cost, high accuracy, combined with the launch and leave capability will make the expected cost per kill against an armored column 9985 dollars per armored vehicle. This of course assumes a five percent aircraft loss rate, which Tactical Air Command believes is high given the delivery technique.

COLONEL: What about soft targets?

FIRST: The Statement of Operational Capability and Statement of Operational Need did not state any desired effectiveness against soft targets.

TAC believes that if you can interdict the armored vehicles, soft target concentrations are easily defeated with a variety of weapons from the existing inventory.

BUTTER: The effectiveness studies indicate that there will be secondary spalling effects that should be highly effective against any soft targets that are in the immediate area. We don't have any hard numbers on secondary spalling effects against soft targets, but it would be relatively easy to modify our models to produce that information.

COLONEL: I don't care about collateral damage. I know that if I blow up a tank and somebody's standing next to it, they're going to be in a world of hurt. I want to know what happens if there's only soft targets around.

- FIRST: Sir, I haven't prepared any charts on soft target effectiveness, nor do I believe that it plays any significant part in the overall cost effectiveness calculations.
- BUTTER: We haven't considered soft target infrared signatures, either singularly or in groups in the seeker algorithm, at any point in the development process.
- JOE: Maybe I can help.
- COLONEL: Who are you?
- JOE: I run the counter measures team here at B.A. Labs. The seeker isn't going to fire at a person. Or even a bunch of people. The heat signature for soft targets like people is all wrong.
- COLONEL: It'll only fire at tanks?
- JOE: Or other armored vehicles; most trucks and cars. And anything that has a heat signature that looks like that.
- COLONEL: Such as?
- JOE: Manure.
- COLONEL: Manure?
- JOE: Most fresh mammal manure has a heat signature that is incredibly similar to a running tank.
- COLONEL: You're saying that this seeker will kill chicken shit?
- JOE: Not chicken shit. Chicken shit has a very different heat signature. But fresh cow shit, or fresh camel shit, or even fresh human shit. It would tend to fire on those.
- COLONEL: It's going to attack latrines?
- JOE: If they're open trench and have some fresh, uh, deposits.
- COLONEL: Ha! I like you. Bob Parsons is lucky to have you working for him.
- JOE: Mr. Parson is a few steps above me.
- COLONEL: Not for long. I can tell you're going places.
- JOE: Thank you.

*(Colonel, First, and Butter exit. Boss enters the office. Boss is seated at the desk. Boss picks up an envelope and opens it. Boss pulls out a letter and reads it. Joe enters his boss's office. Boss motions for Joe to sit down. Joe sits down. Note: Boss is saying what Joe is hearing.)*

BOSS: Due to economic conditions we are forced to implement a reduction in our work force, implement a reduction in our work force, reduction in our work force, work force. Terminated. Terminated. Terminated.

*(Joe stands and looks at Boss, and takes off his tie, jacket, and pants.)*

BOSS: Economic conditions forced to inform you that inform you that you are one are one of the individuals individuals affected affected. We are very appreciative of your efforts on B.A.'s behalf, and we wish you well during this difficult time.

*(Boss stands and walks around the desk to Joe. Boss slaps Joe in the face.)*

BOSS: We regret to inform your employment with B.A. Labs is terminated. We are very appreciative of your efforts on B.A.'s behalf, and we wish you well during this difficult time, well during this difficult time, well during this difficult time.

*(Joe sits down and buries his face in his hands. Boss jerks Joe upright so that he is forced to pay attention.)*

BOSS: Due to economic implement reduction work force. We regret inform individuals effective effective today. Employment employment employment. Difficult difficult difficult time.

*(Joe stands and tries to slap Boss. Boss blocks the slap and knees Joe in the groin. Joe falls to the floor in agony.)*

BOSS: Effective today, we wish you well.

*(Joe tries to stand and Boss steps on Joe, pinning him to the floor.)*

BOSS: Please be advised that B.A. Labs considers all customer lists, prospect lists, price lists, lists, lists, lists confidential and proprietary information proprietary information and that B.A. Labs will enforce will enforce will enforce all rights to maintain that confidentiality to the full extent of the law. Full extent of the law. Full extent of the law.

*(Boss releases Joe and helps him up into the chair again. Joe tries to regain his composure.)*

BOSS: B.A. Labs considers all confidential and proprietary information to the full extent of the law.

*(Boss picks up Joe's clothes and throws them into Joe's face. Joe lets the clothes hit him and fall where they may. Boss picks up the clothes again and throws them at Joe's face again. Joe dodges the clothes.)*

BOSS Again, thank you very much for your efforts your efforts on behalf of B.A. Labs. We are very sorry that this action this action this action has to be taken, and we wish you good luck in your future future future endeavors.

*(Boss picks up Joe's clothes, and goes through the pockets. Boss finds a small item of interest, takes it and then hands the clothes to Joe. Joe takes them, and hold on to them.)*

BOSS: Your efforts on behalf of. Very sorry. This action. Taken. Taken. Future endeavors.

*(Boss pulls Joe out of the chair and walks him towards the door. Boss stops and shakes Joe's hand.)*

BOSS: Very much. Very much. Good. Good, good.

*(Boss turns Joe to the door and pushes him out with great force. Boss returns to the desk and sits down. Boss picks up another envelope,*

*opens it and looks at the letter inside. Boss exits. Joe walks along the street. Jones sits on the sidewalk, leaning against a building.)*

JONES: Can you help me out with a quarter?

*(Joe stops and looks at Jones. Joe sits down next to Jones. Jones regards Joe with suspicion.)*

JONES: Have a seat, brother.

JOE: I got laid off.

JONES: That's rough. You got an extra quarter, dime, anything?

*(A person walks down the street. Jones stands to address her.)*

JONES: Can you help me out? A quarter, anything? So I can get a bite to eat?

*(The person finds some small change and gives it to Jones.)*

JONES: Thank, you. Thank you, very much.

*(The person looks at Joe, who has watched the whole thing, but clearly isn't begging. The person pulls out a dollar bill and gives it to Joe. The person quickly leaves, glancing back at Joe.)*

JONES: Shit.

JOE: I don't have a job anymore.

JONES: You got a buck.

JOE: Why me? Why did they pick me?

JONES: At least you had a job.

*(Joe gets up and puts on his clothes, leaving the dollar behind him. Jones grabs the dollar as Joe walks away. Joe goes to his living room and sits on the couch. Jones exits. Pam enters.)*

PAM: You're home early. *(Pause.)* What's wrong?

JOE: *(Joe picks up a pamphlet. Note: Joe is saying what Pam is hearing.)* Unemployment insurance provides, unemployment, unemployment, temporary, temporary, through no fault of their own, no fault of their own.

*(Pam collapses to the floor. Joe stands and continues to read directly above her.)*

JOE: Workers in the following categories not eligible: certain religious organizations, organizations, trainees non-profit or public, or public. Commission basis only, consultants, consultants, elected officials, members of a legislative body, legislative or of the judiciary.

*(Joe pulls Pam to her feet.)*

JOE: Eligible, eligible, eligible!

*(Joe lets go of Pam, she collapses again. Joe sits down.)*

JOE: Benefits by formula! Take two calendar quarters highest wages. Divide. Divide by two. Maximum weekly benefit amount. Total amount of benefits thirty times or thirty six percent, whichever is less! Length can vary up to thirty weeks. Pensions are deductible if entitlement computed benefited base year solely by file a claim being available for actively seeking full-time work.

*(Pam crawls to Joe and puts her head in his lap.)*

JOE: Trade Adjustment Assistance, assistance is available, available, lose their jobs, lose, lose. Result of increased. Trade Act of 1974, amended, amended, adversely affected, adversely affected. Variety of benefits, services, help, help, help. Weekly trade readjustment allowances. Allowances. Exhaustion of benefits.

*(Pam stands, pulls Joe to his feet. She hugs Joe and leads him off. Walker enters the office and sits behind the desk. Joe enters and sits in a visitor's chair on the other side of the desk.)*

WALKER: Give me an example of what you did at B.A. Labs.

JOE: I would try and figure out ways to defeat the weapons systems that were being designed. For example if the weapon was using an infrared sensor, I would look for ways I could change the infrared signature on a tank. Or I would look for things that have a similar heat signature and I could use to fool the sensor.

WALKER: Joe. We make lawn mowers. *(Three sprites enter. They quietly sing, doing polka-like backup, behind Walker. )*

JOE: I know that. I guess it's sort of like, uh, when you make lawn mowers. You must have someone who thinks about what could go wrong. Someone who thinks about what would happen if there's a big stick or something and it gets run over by the lawn mower.

SPRITES: Strike up the music, the band has begun, the Pennsylvania Polka. Pick out your partner and join in the fun, the Pennsylvania Polka. It started in Scranton, it's now number one. It's bound to entertain ya! Everybody has a mania, to do the polka from Pennsylvania!



WALKER: No.

JOE: I guess the point is that you have to be a pretty good engineer to be able to assess the weaknesses of a design. You have to really understand the implications of design choices. *(The sprites move next to Joe. They continue to sing the chorus, getting louder.)*

WALKER: How many people did you have working for you?

JOE: Well, the team I was in charge of had five engineers, two systems analysts, and one administrative support person assigned to it. They didn't actually report to me, because we were a fully matrixed organization. I had input into their reviews, of course. *SPRITES: (Getting louder.)*  
Everybody has a mania,  
to do the polka  
from Pennsylvania!  
Everybody has  
a mania, to do  
the polka from  
Pennsylvania!  
Everybody has  
a mania, to do  
the polka from  
Pennsylvania!  
Everybody has  
a mania, to do  
the polka from  
Pennsylvania!

WALKER: But they didn't actually report to you? *(They continue.)*

JOE: No.

WALKER: What sort of role do you see yourself in here? *(The Sprites circle Joe)*

JOE: I think there's a variety of things that I could do that I think would add a lot of value. I have a lot of experience with engineering methods, project management; so I think could function as a sort of internal consultant in a staff position. Of course, I would rather work in a line position, and whether that's in design, manufacturing or even quality, I'm sure that I could provide a new perspective and really bring a lot to the table.

SPRITES: (*Gradually changing from singing to chanting.*)  
Everybody has a mania!  
Everybody has a mania!  
Everybody has a mania!  
Everybody has a mania!  
Everybody has a mania!  
Everybody has a mania!  
Everybody has a mania!  
Everybody has a mania!  
Everybody has a mania!

WALKER: I started off as a quality engineer. (*The Sprites stop circling Joe.*)

JOE: I think my experience would make quality a good fit for me.  
In today's market, quality is becoming more and more important. Maybe we've learned something from the Japanese.

SPRITES: (*Getting closer and closer to Joe.*)  
Mania! Mania! Mania!  
Mania! Mania! Mania!  
Mania! Mania! Mania!  
Mania! Mania! Mania!  
Mania! Mania! Mania!  
Mania!

WALKER: I hated quality.

JOE: It's not for everyone.

SPRITES: (*Like a dirge*) Pick out your partner and join in the fun, the Pennsylvania Polka.

WALKER: Well, I've enjoyed talking with you. We'll be in touch shortly.  
(*Joe stands, shakes hands with Walker*)

JOE: Thank you.

*(Walker exits. Joe exits.)*

SPRITES: *(Joyfully, after Joe exits.)*

Everybody has a mania,  
to do the polka from  
Pennsylvania!

*(The Sprites move forward towards the audience. The First Sprite tells the story and the Second and Third Sprites interrupt and take over the telling.)*

FIRST SPRITE: Once upon a time there was a small village. It was a new village and the villagers were having a pretty tough time making a go of it. But luckily they had many natural resources and they worked very hard. They all pitched in and they believed in themselves.

THIRD SPRITE: In their spare time they did wood working, and made many wonderful things.

FIRST SPRITE: The farmers grew beautiful vegetables.

THIRD SPRITE: And lovely fat sheep.

FIRST SPRITE: Everyone had enough to eat.

SECOND SPRITE: Although not everyone had their own power tools.

FIRST SPRITE: Everyone shopped at the local hardware store, which was run by Dave, and they bought their food at the local market, which was run by Judy.

THIRD SPRITE: It was called Judy's market.

FIRST SPRITE: When someone needed a couple of screws or nuts or nails, they would go to Dave's hardware store and Dave would sell them what they needed. And sometimes when someone in the town saved up some extra cash, they would go to Dave's hardware store and buy a power tool of their very own. Ned was the local banker.

- THIRD SPRITE: And when all the farmers had bumper crops and repaid all the loans that Ned had given them, Ned bought a reversible drill.
- SECOND SPRITE: He almost bought a belt sander at the same time, but Ned knew that he would be over extended if he did, so he didn't.
- FIRST SPRITE: Time went on and the village continued to prosper.
- THIRD SPRITE: Judy's market was filled with all sorts of food.
- SECOND SPRITE: Not all sorts, she only carried two different flavors of Pop Tarts, because it was still only a village, after all.
- FIRST SPRITE: Dave sold more power tools and everyone started to feel just a little bit self assured.
- THIRD SPRITE: Ned bought that belt sander he'd been thinking about.
- SECOND SPRITE: The big national hardware store chain quickly got wind of how many power tools Dave was selling in his hardware store.
- FIRST SPRITE: They built a great big "Home Center" on the edge of town, out by the interstate. At first everyone in town still shopped at Dave's hardware store.
- SECOND SPRITE: But before long word got around that you could get power tools cheaper at the Home Center.
- THIRD SPRITE: And you could, because not only did the home center have volume, volume, volume; they were willing to cut prices to get business.
- SECOND SPRITE: And they did. Pretty soon, the people in the village only went to Dave when they needed a couple of screws, or a nut, or a couple of nails. At the Home Center they would have to buy a pack of forty nuts, but Dave would sell them just two or three if that was all they needed.

- And they always bought their power tools at the Home Center because it was cheaper. Well, you can't make a living selling two nuts here and five nails there and never ever selling any power tools. So Dave had to close up his store.
- FIRST SPRITE: But he got a job at the Home Center.
- THIRD SPRITE: And that was okay with Dave because a new supermarket had opened up right next to the Home Center and they had all the different flavors of Pop Tarts, including brown sugar cinnamon with frosting, which was his favorite and which Judy never carried in her market.
- SECOND SPRITE: It wasn't long before Judy went out of business, and had to go work in the supermarket in the produce section. And people stopped waiting until they had made extra money before they bought power tools.
- FIRST SPRITE: The Home Center gave them credit, all the credit they wanted. Soon, there wasn't anyone in the village who didn't own a lathe or table saw, or at least a reversible drill.
- SECOND SPRITE: And then came a year when the harvest wasn't very good. And the farmers couldn't make the payments on their power tools. And they couldn't sell them because there wasn't anyone who didn't have them.
- THIRD SPRITE: But that was okay because the national chain offered to buy their farms so they could pay for the power tools.
- SECOND SPRITE: The farmers didn't want to sell their farms, but they didn't have much choice.
- FIRST SPRITE: Soon the national chain that owned the Home Center and the supermarket owned the whole town and everyone worked for them.
- THIRD SPRITE: Everyone owned power tools.
- SECOND SPRITE: No one did any wood working anymore.

*(Billings enters the office and sits behind the desk.  
Joe enters and sits in the visitor chair opposite.)*

BILLINGS: Your resume is very      *(Three sprites huddle behind Joe.)*  
impressive. I just have  
a couple of questions.

JOE: Sure.

BILLINGS: Who won the 1965  
Nobel prize for physics?

SPRITES: Feynman. Richard P.  
Feynman.

JOE: 65? Was that Feynman?

BILLINGS

BILLINGS: And?

JOE: And? *(Joe looks to the Sprites (The sprites dance away from Joe.)  
for help).*

BILLINGS: Three physicists were  
awarded the prize that  
year for their simultane-  
ous discoveries in quan-  
tum electrodynamics.

JOE: Look, I'm an engineer. I  
think I have a lot to  
offer as an engineer, and  
my experience is pretty  
diverse and gives me  
some very useful per-  
spective on the whole  
engineering process.

SPRITES: *(Singing.)*

Everybody has a mania!  
Everybody has a mania!  
Everybody has a mania!  
Everybody has a mania!  
Everybody has a mania!

BILLINGS: Julian Schwinger and  
Shin'ichiro Tomonaga

JOE: Of course.

BILLINGS: The award was  
presented by  
Ivar Walleron on  
December 10th,  
1965. Unfortunately,  
there's absolutely  
no way I could hire  
someone who didn't  
know that. Thank you  
for your time.

*(Joe stands and Billings shakes his  
hand. Billings exits. Joe turns  
to the Sprites.)*

FIRST SPRITE: We've got a lovely  
parting gift for our contestant  
that didn't get a job today. This  
high quality tape of all your  
favorite polkas! So tell me, Joe,  
is there anything that you'd like  
to share with our home audi-  
ence after yet another crushing  
defeat in the great employment  
search?

SPRITES: Strike up the music,  
the band has begun,  
the Pennsylvania Polka.  
Pick out your partner  
and join in the fun, the  
Pennsylvania Polka. It  
started in Scranton,  
it's now number one.  
It's bound to entertain  
ya! Everybody has a  
mania, to do the polka  
from Pennsylvania!

*(Joe looks at the Sprites in disgust and walks to his liv-  
ing room. The Sprites dance away joyfully. His daugh-  
ter, Judy enters and sits next to him.)*

JUDY: Mommy said you'd explain the facts of life to me.

JOE: She did?

JUDY: She went to work.

JOE: Okay. The facts of life. You work hard all your life because  
that's what you're supposed to do. You give everything you've  
got and you only get a five percent raise but that's okay

because you believe in what you're doing. Then one day peace breaks out all over and profits are down and the board needs to make the stock price go up and they lay you off, and it's sorry, sorry, thanks for everything. Everything you know is useless and it's back to the bottom because the mortgage didn't go away, and you can't even understand what the word fair might mean, but that's the way it goes sometimes, all the time, and there's not a thing you can do about it.

*(Pause.)*

JUDY: Where do babies come from?

JOE: What?

JUDY: Billy says that babies come from the hospital and Lisa says the stork brings them.

JOE: *(Pause.)* Babies come from love. When a man and a woman love each other very much that love grows into a baby in the woman's stomach. And when it's time the woman goes to the hospital and the doctor helps bring the baby out. Okay?

JUDY: Okay.

*(Davis enters the office and sits behind the desk. Joe enters the office and sits in the visitor chair. Judy exits.)*

DAVIS: Credo Elvis ipsum etiam vivere.

*(Three sprites enter. and line up behind Davis.)*

JOE: What?

DAVIS: Elvis ipsum etiam vivere.

JOE: I think I lost lock.

SPRITES: Elvis is still alive.

DAVIS: Latin.

*(The Sprites quietly start to sing the Pennsylvania Polka moving and sounding like Elvis.)*



JOE: Yes.  
 DAVIS: I like to conduct interviews in Latin sometimes.  
 JOE: I don't speak Latin.  
 DAVIS: You can answer in English.  
 JOE: I don't know what you asked.  
 DAVIS: Does that really make a difference?  
 JOE: I'd like to think so.  
 FIRST SPRITE: The king, you idiot!  
 SECOND SPRITE: Is he alive?  
 THIRD SPRITE: What do you think?  
 DAVIS: Just answer. I can't help you any more than that.  
 JOE: I think Elvis is dead.  
 DAVIS: Nullo modo.  
 SPRITES: (*Chant until Joe exits.*)  
 Loser, loser, loser, loser, loser, loser, loser, loser,  
 loser, loser.

*(Joe glares at the sprites. Davis exits. Jones fades in. Joe exits to the street. The Sprites exit. Joe sees Jones and sits with him on the sidewalk. Jones has a cup from a fast food restaurant. A person walks by.)*

JONES: Help me out, buddy? Some spare change?

*(The person walks by ignoring Jones. Joe holds out his hand, and is also ignored.)*

JONES: You got to do better than that. Stemming is work, buddy. Look at you. You don't even got a cup.

*(Person walks by.)*

JONES: Spare change? Help me out with a quarter? Dime?

*(Person ignores Jones, but notices Joe's pitiful, silent plea. Person gives Joe some change and moves on.)*

JONES: Shit. You don't even got a pitch and you gets it. You don't even got a cup. People don't want to touch us, so you got to have a cup. They think they catch something, they touch us. But, a cup. They just drop it right in the old cup. No touch. No contact. People like that. But you don't even got a cup.

*(Person walks by.)*

JONES: Spare a quarter so I can get something to eat?

*(Person looks at Jones then at Joe and gives Joe a dollar bill.)*

JONES: Shit. What am I? You don't have one lousy quarter for me?

*(Person quickly leaves.)*

JONES: This is my place. You come here in my home and you don't even have a cup and you don't even know nothing about stemming. You don't even talk and you get quarters, you get bills. Shit. You gotta get out of my home.

*(Joe looks at Jones. Joe stands, takes the money he has received and drops it into Jones' cup. Joe gets up.)*

JONES: Oh man. Don't go. I didn't mean nothing. We'll take this and get some wine. We have us a little party. I'll teach you about stemming.

*(Jones and Joe walk away arm in arm. Joe ends up in his living room and Jones exits. Joe sits on the couch of his living room. Pam enters after a hard days work.)*

PAM: Hi.

JOE: Hi.

PAM: How'd the interviews go?

JOE: Loved me.

PAM: Have you been drinking?

JOE: Little. With my friend.

*(Pam inspects Joe closely and finds that he stinks of wine and Jones.)*

PAM: You stink.

JOE: Sorry.

PAM: You were supposed to pick Judy up from Day Care.

*(Joe stands, suddenly realizes that he's left his daughter.)*

JOE: Shit. Where's the keys?

PAM: They called me at the office and I picked her up.

JOE: I'm sorry.

PAM: Sorry? Sorry? No, you're not sorry. Pitiful, maybe. A poor excuse for a father, certainly.

JOE: I don't know what happened.

PAM: You got drunk and left your daughter at day care. You got drunk in the middle of the day. I don't care how unemployed you are and how sorry you feel for yourself. You still have a family here and even if you don't care about yourself, we care about you.

JOE: I'm so sorry.

PAM: Don't give me that sorry crap. Give me, I found a job. At least, I looked for a job.

JOE: It's not so goddamn easy out there.

PAM: Nobody's hunting you down to offer you the perfect job?

JOE: Give me a break.

PAM: Was that what this afternoon was? A break? You spent the afternoon in the bar because you needed a break from looking for a job?

JOE: I didn't spend the afternoon in a bar.

PAM: Don't lie to me, Joe.

JOE: We were drinking in an alley. A stinking alley with rats and trash.

PAM: I'm so happy to know that you weren't wasting your time in a bar.

JOE: You don't know what it's like out there. There aren't a lot of jobs.

PAM: No? What's this?

*(Pam picks up a newspaper and reads from it.)*

PAM: Undertaking several long-term and short-term technical assistance and project implementation activities and is currently recruiting the following experienced personnel: Geologist, Demographer, Human Epidemiologist, Cartography Specialist, Institutional Management Consultant.

JOE: *(Picking up another newspaper.)* Alert, aggressive people to train for management position in dry clean chain.

PAM: River Navigation Specialist, Inland Fisheries Specialist, Power Planner, Optimization Specialist!

JOE: The world's leader in teaching social dancing needs instructors. Full and part time, earn 8 to 15 dollars an hour. Excellent career opportunity, complete training.

PAM: Suitably qualified and experienced professionals in these and associated disciplines, associated disciplines, submit on an urgent basis.

*(Joe drops his paper and faces Pam. Pam drops her paper and stands facing Joe. They batter each other with their speeches. Joe gets the worst of it.)*

JOE: Growing firm seeks, seeks, seeks enthusiastic computer skills preferred. Preferred.

PAM: Challenging opportunity, challenging opportunity, central planning, funding, coordinating organizations.

JOE: Answer phones and data entry at a very very very busy busy.

PAM: Attractive salary and benefits package. Immediate consideration, resume, salary history, division of personnel.

JOE: Part time cook. Breakfast experience wanted. Wanted. Experience.

PAM: Managing change part every manager's role. Fundamental shifts, direction, motivation, behavior, organizational shape and culture. Extremely, extremely rewarding. Professionally and Financially. Financially.

*(Joe falls to the floor, beaten.)*

PAM: Tax paid salary plus expatriate benefits. Benefits.

*(Pam exits. Walker, Billings and Davis enter the office. Joe stands and goes to the office.)*

WALKER: Which is more important, Young's modulus or Rockwell hardness?

BILLINGS: Do you favor Just in Time or MRP?

DAVIS: In what film did Ann Margret co-star with Elvis?

JOE: It depends upon the context of the situation. Give me an example. Follow That Dream?

BILLINGS: Cash flow.

DAVIS: Viva Las Vegas.

WALKER: Mower blades.

JOE: What? What did you say?

DAVIS: Which was Elvis's best movie in terms of cinematography?

WALKER: If you could make the blade guard any color you wanted, what color would you make it and why?

BILLINGS: Summarize Feynman's contribution to quantum electrodynamics.

JOE: I just want a goddamn job!

WALKER: A mower blade kicks up a rock and it enters the mower operator below the thorax.

DAVIS: Love Me Tender, King Creole, Fun in Acapulco, and Spinout.

BILLINGS: Quantum manufacturing control systems of a particularly spectacular nature.

JOE: I'm good. Really, I'm good. I work hard. I work very hard and I'm good. Really I am.

*(Pam fades in. Joe breaks down and falls to the floor sobbing. The Sprites enter and drag him home to Pam who sits in the living room. Walker, Billings, and Davis exit.)*

PAM: Did they make you an offer?

*(The Sprites move Joe into a sitting position.)*

PAM: Did it go well?

JOE: Strike up the music, the band has begun.

PAM: That's great.

JOE: It's bound to entertain ya.

PAM: How are the benefits?

*(The Sprites hit Joe and push him forward onto the floor.)*

PAM: What's wrong?

*(The Sprites start to drag Joe off.)*

PAM: What happened? Tell me what happened, Joe.

*(Pam grabs Joe and starts a tug of war with the Sprites.)*

PAM: Joe! I'm here for you. Whatever happened. There's other jobs, Joe. It's not that important. Don't let it get to you. Please. Just talk to me, Joe. Please, Joe.

*(Joe struggles to stay with Pam and the sprites give up and exit.)*

JOE: I'm never going to get a job.

PAM: Yes you are. You have a lot to offer.

JOE: Everybody has a mania.

PAM: There isn't a company out there that wouldn't gain from your experience. You just need to find someone with a little bit of vision.

JOE: You think so?

PAM: Yes.

*(Pam helps Joe up and dusts him off.)*

JOE: I don't think I want to be an engineer.

PAM: Then don't be an engineer. There's lots of non-engineering jobs out there. There's lots of things you can do.

JOE: Maybe. Maybe so.

*(Joe gets up and wanders off, lost in thought. Jones fades in and Pam fades out. Joe finds Jones on the street and joins him.)*

JOE: It's a question of marketing. You have to put yourself in their place, and try and think how they see things.

JONES: I been there.

JOE: Of course you have. But you need to think about how they see you. How they see stemming.

JONES: Just stemming.

JOE: Sure, it is. To you. To them it's begging. And it's more than that. It's a reminder of the problems of modern society. It's a reminder of whatever guilt they have about almost anything.

JONES: Just stemming, man.

JOE: Look. I'm trying to help you do better. Help you get more money. Be more efficient in your stemming.

JONES: Shit.

JOE: Look, look, man. Do your thing, on this lady.

*(Person enters and walks by.)*

JONES: Could you help me out? Spare a quarter, dime?

*(Person ignores Jones and walks away.)*

JOE: Did you see that? She wouldn't even look at you.

JONES: Lot of people don't look at us.

JOE: Right. And why not? Guilt. They don't want to see us. But you can use that. You can use that guilt to become a more effective stemmer.

JONES: Shit.

*(Pause.)*

JOE: Let me help you.

JONES: What do you know? Where did you sleep last night?

JOE: Watch this.

*(A person enters and walks by.)*

JOE: Excuse me. Could you spare some change so I could get something to eat. I really need to get a bite to eat so I can look for a job.

*(The person stops, looks at Joe and walks away.)*

JONES: Oh yeah. You some hero stemmer. You getting bills and coins all over with that bit.

JOE: Nothing's going to work all the time. Look, we'll have a contest. One on one. We both go after everyone who walks by and we see who ends up with more money.

JONES: This ain't no game. Shit. You think I stem because I like to? Shit, who the hell do you think you are?

JOE: Just the next ten people who come by.



*(A person enters and walks by.)*

JONES: Help me out with a quarter, buddy?

JOE: Excuse me. Excuse me.

*(The person gives Jones some change and ignores Joe, then exits.)*

JONES: Oh yeah. You some hero stemmer.

*(A Person enters and walks by. The Sprites enter behind the woman and dance and sing the Pennsylvania Polka between Joe and the person, while he tries to stem.)*

JOE: Excuse me, excuse me.

JONES: Help me out with a quarter?

*(The person gives Jones a quarter and goes on her way. Another person enter. The person sees Jones and gives him a dollar bill, while ignoring Joe, then exits. The sprites continue to dance and sing around Joe.)*

JOE: No. No!

*(Joe begins to strike at the sprites, they easily dodge away from Joe as if it's part of their dance. Jones watches Joe, but Jones can't see the sprites.)*

JONES: Shit, man. You got it bad.

JOE: Goddamn you!

*(The sprites suddenly stop dancing. They freeze for a moment, staring at Joe. Joe looks from one to another of the sprites.)*

JONES: It ain't me you got the problem with.

*(The sprites break into dance and song, and exit joyfully. Joe falls to the ground and sobs loudly. Jones tries to comfort him.)*

JONES: It'll be okay, man. We all get it, sometimes.

*(Pam fades in. Joe recovers and goes to his living room. Jones exits. Joe and Pam sit in their living room after dinner. Note: Pam and Joe speak the dominant image that each other hear.)*

PAM: Second interview.

JOE: Relevant experience.

PAM: Skill set.

JOE: Knowledge base.

*(Pause.)*

PAM: Family. House. Home.

JOE: Of course.

PAM: Judy. You. Me. Us.

JOE: Yes. Yes.

*(Pause.)*

PAM: Skill set.

JOE: Resume.

PAM: You.

JOE: Resume. Cover letter. Resume.

PAM: Bullshit.

*(Pause.)*

JOE: Counter measure engineer.

PAM: Father. Husband.

JOE: Weapons systems analysis.

PAM: Brilliant analyst. Manager. Visionary. Process. Insight.

JOE: Thank you, but.

*(Pause.)*

PAM: Future. Build.

JOE: History.

PAM: You.

JOE: Us?

PAM: Of course.

JOE: Hard.

PAM: Us.

*(Pam embraces Joe. Joe exits to the street. Pam fades out. Joe sits in the street. A person walks down a city street. Joe begs for money.)*

JOE: Can you help me out, pal?

*(Person avoids eye contact with Joe and walks past him.)*

JOE: Thanks. Have yourself a nice day.

*(Joe sits on the sidewalk. The sprites enter, walking down the street just like the man did.)*

JOE: Can you help me ....

FIRST SPRITE: Joe.

JOE: Oh Christ.

SECOND SPRITE: Joe, Joe, Joe.

THIRD SPRITE: This isn't you, Joe.

JOE: Who are you?

SPRITES: Strike up the music, the band has begun, the Pennsylvania Polka –

JOE: No! I hate that song.

SECOND SPRITE: Joe, Joe, Joe.

FIRST SPRITE: Joe.

THIRD SPRITE: But it's your song.

JOE: Don't you know any other songs? I mean, go ahead and sing, but no more Pennsylvania Polka.

FIRST SPRITE: Sure.

SECOND SPRITE: Whatever you say.

THIRD SPRITE: It's your choice. Your song.  
SECOND SPRITE: What do you want to sing?  
THIRD SPRITE: We'll sing whatever you want.  
FIRST SPRITE: You're the singer, Joe. We're just backup.  
JOE: I'm not a singer.  
FIRST SPRITE: Joe.  
SECOND SPRITE: Joe, Joe, Joe.  
THIRD SPRITE: You're too modest, babe.  
JOE: I'm an engineer.

*(The sprites laugh hysterically.)*

FIRST SPRITE: Joe.  
THIRD SPRITE: You're too funny, babe.  
SECOND SPRITE: Joe, Joe, Joe.  
JOE: I'm an engineer.  
THIRD SPRITE: Sure, you used to work as an engineer.  
SECOND SPRITE: And maybe you will again.  
FIRST SPRITE: If you want to.  
THIRD SPRITE: Like we said, sing any song you want.  
FIRST SPRITE: We're just backup.  
SECOND SPRITE: Joe, Joe, Joe.  
FIRST SPRITE: *(sings "The Beer Barrel Polka".)*  
Roll out the barrel, we'll have a barrel of fun.  
Roll out the barrel, we've got the blues on the  
run. Sing, boom, tererra, sing out a song of  
good cheer. Now's the time to roll the barrel  
'cause the gang's all here!  
SECOND SPRITE: *(sings "Strip Polka".)*  
There's a burlesque theater where the gang likes  
to go, to see Queenie the cutie of the burlesque  
show. And the thrill of the evening is when out  
Queenie skips, and the band plays the polka  
while she strips. Take it off, take it off, cries a  
voice from the rear. Take it off, take it off, soon  
it's all you can hear. But she's always a lady even in  
pantomime, so she stops, and always just in time.

THIRD SPRITE: *(sings "The Too Fat Polka.")*  
 Oh I don't want her, you can have her, she's too fat for me. She's too fat for me. I get dizzy, I get numbo, when I'm dancing with my jumbo. I don't want her, you can have her, she's too fat for me. She's too fat for me. She's a twosome, she's a foursome, if she'd lose some, I'd like her more some. I don't want her, you can have her, she's too fat for me. She's too fat for me.

*(The First and Second Sprites cut off the Third Sprite in disgust, before the song is completed.)*

JOE: Don't you sing anything other than polkas?  
 FIRST SPRITE: You're just a polka kind of guy.  
 SECOND SPRITE: Go with it, Joe.  
 THIRD SPRITE: There's nothing wrong with being a polka kind of guy.

*(Pause.)*

JOE: Okay. I'm a polka kind of guy.  
 SECOND SPRITE: That's it.  
 FIRST SPRITE: Sing any polka you want.  
 THIRD SPRITE: Don't let anybody stop you.  
 SPRITES: You're a polka kind of guy!  
 JOE: I'm a polka kind of guy!

*(The Sprites exit. Simms enters the office and sits behind his desk. Joe goes to the office and sits in the visitor's chair on the other side of the desk.)*

SIMMS: You have a very impressive resume. It's not what we usually see or expect in a teacher, but I like to think that we are very broad minded here.

*(Three sprites enter quietly and watch Simms and Joe from the side. They give Joe encouraging looks and cheer him on.)*

- JOE: Look. I'm a polka kind of guy.  
SIMMS: And that's important to us.  
JOE: I can sing any polka I want, any polka you want. And that's what you're really want in an employee isn't it?  
SIMMS: Roll out the barrel.  
JOE: We'll have a barrel of fun.  
SIMMS: Roll out the barrel.  
JOE: We've got the blues on the run.  
SIMMS: Now's the time to roll the barrel.  
JOE: 'Cause the gang's all here!  
SIMMS: We can't give you the compensation you're used to. Teachers don't make the same sort of money that engineers do.  
JOE: It started in Scranton, it's now number one. It's bound to entertain ya!

*(Pause.)*

- SIMMS: But I'm sure you'll love the work.  
JOE: Everybody has a mania, to do the polka from Pennsylvania!

*(Joe and Simms stand and shake hands. Joe walks to the Sprites, exchanges high fives and does a small victory polka with them. Simms exits. Joe and the Sprites exit. Pam and Judy enter the bedroom and Pam tucks Judy into bed. Joe enters. Pam stands and greets Joe with a hug.)*

- PAM: Goodnight sweetheart.

*(Joe sits on the bed next to Judy. Pam watches them briefly and exits.)*

- JUDY: Will you tell me a story?

- JOE: Sure. Once upon a time there was a hummingbird named Ralph. Ralph was a lot like all the other hummingbirds, he

liked to fly around, flitting from flower to flower drinking some nectar here, a little nectar there, flying backwards, hovering, just having fun doing hummingbird things. But that wasn't all Ralph liked to do, Ralph watched the woodpeckers and decided that he'd like to do a little wood working just like the woodpeckers did. Ralph's beak was made for drinking nectar, not pounding holes into trees, but that didn't stop Ralph. He watched the woodpeckers and drank water with them and they told him the secrets of wood working. They told him about the grains of the wood and the way the sap runs in the spring and even where the best grubs lived. Ralph didn't much care about the grubs, because being a hummingbird he lived on nectar, but he listened and learned a lot about wood working.

Ralph wanted very desperately to do some wood working of his own. The more he learned, the more he hung around with the woodpeckers, the more he wanted to do his own woodworking. He didn't want to make a home like the woodpeckers did, or even find grubs to eat like the woodpeckers did. Ralph wanted to make designs, beautiful, sacred hummingbird designs in the trees. Ralph thought and thought and then an idea came to him. He knew he couldn't pound his beak into the trees like the woodpeckers did, but he thought that if he tapped his beak very gently, but very quickly into the tree he might get somewhere. And he did. Because hummingbirds can move very, very quickly, Ralph could make his beak work like a little power tool. And with his little power tool beak he could make beautiful, sacred hummingbird designs in the trees. And he did.

When the big spring hovering contest was held, Ralph didn't go. The other hummingbirds would say, "Hey Ralph, you going to the big spring hovering contest? I hear that Jacobson from down south's going to be there. I hear she can hover like it's nobody's business." But Ralph was too busy carving his designs into the trees of the forest. When the contest was over, the hummingbirds made fun of Ralph. They said, "Hey Ralph, what do you think you are, a woodpecker?" And then they would laugh at Ralph.

*(The lights slowly start to fade.)*

And then one day a great horrible storm came. It turned the sky black in the middle of the day. The storm wreaked havoc, destroying everything in its path. The hummingbirds were terrified, they didn't know what to do. The storm was coming straight for their forest and meadow, straight for their home. The storm drew nearer and nearer and the hummingbirds got more and more scared. Except Ralph. Ralph wasn't scared at all. And you know what happened? The storm came and tore up trees and ripped up chunks of the meadow and made everything topsy turvey. When it was over the hummingbirds looked around and they noticed something. All the trees that were left standing had Ralph's designs on them. His sacred hummingbird designs had saved the trees.

*(The lights have faded to almost complete black and Judy is asleep.)*

You sleep easy, sweetheart. Your daddy is a polka kind of guy.

*(Blackout.)*

## **Commentary by Dawn Elm (University of St. Thomas) and Sandra Waddock (Boston College)**

In 2001 Dawn was preparing to give the annual Division Chair Address for the Social Issues in Management (SIM) Division of the Academy of Management. She wanted to celebrate the unique culture of the division which was “family” to many of her colleagues in the academy. During that year, she saw a staged reading of Steve Taylor’s *Capitalist Pigs* (Chap. 3) at another conference and was struck by the intensity of the experience for both the audience and the cast. She asked Steve if he had a play that might convey the message she wanted, and he suggested *Soft Targets*. She introduced the play by conveying her initial reasoning for performing *Soft Targets* as her divisional address:



*We have attempted to articulate the character or essence of the SIM division in a number of ways over the past ten years. This character brings us together here. Whatever this character is, for me it represents one of the ways we create or find meaning in our work. There is something about this division that draws people in.*

*To have meaningful work requires two central elements: An awareness of the activities in which you are engaged at the present moment and allowing your whole self to be involved. This mindfulness and presence of the entire self allows for comfort and joy. It also involves risk in exposing the innermost elements of ourselves to each other. That can only happen with **trust**. Regardless of how you perceive the SIM division, or its purpose for you, there must be trust if we are to truly bring our whole selves to the party (literally and figuratively). I would argue this is the foundation of the character of SIM that draws us together. We disagree, we pursue a multitude of avenues of scholarship, we represent a wide variety of water(see Footnote 1) scholars; but we come together in a space that allows us to do these things with meaning, joy, and safety.*

*The essence of SIM, this unique character that we cannot necessarily articulate clearly, or touch with our fingertips, is this meaningful interaction. The source of this essence, for me, is the **relationships** we have with each other. Jim Collins (2001) has suggested that meaningful work is that which builds relationships. Sandra Waddock (2001) has argued that integrity and mindfulness are the two foundational pillars of corporate citizenship; which she defines as: "Relationships with stakeholders constitutes the essence of corporate citizenship," (Waddock, pg. 27). Integrity for Sandra includes the elements of wholeness and honesty. She states "being honest with oneself means exploring what the realities are, knowing who or what one is, and acting forthrightly consistent with that knowledge". (Waddock, pg. 27). (Elm 2001)*

Not surprisingly, Dawn asked Sandra Waddock to be a cast member in the play. She and several other SIM colleagues agreed to perform for the address. The reading we staged raised a number of conceptual issues related to business in society content. Including what Dawn had intended, but also issues she hadn't. For example, the issue of power—who has it and how is it used, or the issue of what happens internally to people who are laid off—and, in the first act, to people who have to do

the laying off; and the experience based learning about success and failure of the characters in the play.

More intriguing than the content of the play, though, was the reaction of the academics who witnessed the staged reading. As Steve notes in his opening comments, there is a certain ambiguity about the plays that allows for numerous interpretations. A staged reading of a play was certainly a non-traditional way for a division chair to deliver the division chair's address and not everyone was happy to see the shift towards the incorporation of aesthetic sensibility into what they apparently like to think of as a more rigorous approach to scholarship. (It is hard for many of us to give up the rational analytic understanding that forms the basis of most academic research). But let us consider for a moment what types of 'social issues in management,' might get raised in a play like Taylor's and how that understanding might inform our research perspectives both in the content of the play as well as the experiences of the audience and cast members in artistic understanding.

The CEO in the first act is asked to cut costs because of business problems, a common enough dilemma for managers. His initial reaction is striking: 'Layoffs are not the answer. The employees of this company are the company. Having layoffs is like bleeding yourself to get well.' Companies typically claim that they put employee welfare either first or certainly as a high priority. And few managers and leaders actually *want* to make layoffs because they are painful for all parties. Yet the imperatives of the business system as it is currently constructed too often demand such 'cost cutting' measures, despite the claim of viewing employees as vital assets. In that interpretation, in some sense, lies part of the problem. Employees viewed as 'assets' are analogous to viewing them as equipment or furniture, not as people with whom you have relationships, not even as stakeholders (Freeman 1984) important to the company's survival and success. Of course, 'assets' of all sorts are vital, but the company's employees, as Bob points out in the first chapter, in a very real way *are* the company.

Recognizing this interpretation, CEO Bob repeatedly seeks a 'creative solution,' that goes beyond the knee-jerk response of most managers—layoffs. Ultimately, however, the imperatives of a business system bound to bottom line results above other values, like relational, community, or

human values, wins out. As the play illustrates, the implications are devastating for CEO Bob, his family, and, of course the lives of the people ultimately laid off. It is these implications, ethical and social, where the richness of the sensemaking role of the intellectual shaman (Waddock 2015) lies and where the *emotional* engagement—not just intellectual engagement—with the difficult subject matter of Taylor’s play can possibly best be raised in an aesthetic context. It is in seeing how numbers, because they are quantifiable and reified as what the ‘purpose’ of business enterprise is, can seem more important than the very human implications of managerial action.

Plays and other forms of art allow for multiple perspectives to emerge and be seen in context. Seeing, hearing, or certainly acting in such a play raises all sorts of possible interpretations that an academic article might struggle with, placing the viewer or actor into the context in a very different way that is possible in typical academic research. It stretches our own boundaries as scholars and researchers and asks *us* to become more creative in understanding, outlining, and interpreting our own work. It allows for different stakeholders to express their own views and asks us as viewers to understand that multiple perspectives with very different realities can exist simultaneously—and that we typically tend to see only from one, our own, inevitably biased perspective.

Act II, which is what Dawn staged for her division chair’s address, addresses the internal conflict that practices like layoffs bring. It vividly demonstrates that the external manifestations, how a person *seems* to be reacting, do not necessarily reflect what is happening internally. This act, from a researcher’s perspective, raises the issue of how we can ever fully know what is going on inside someone’s world when we cannot truly put ourselves into that world.

The churning world that Joe, who has been laid off, experiences afterwards can be spoken about in retrospect, of course. But the *experience* of a play brings that experience to life in a way that is not possible for the academic, even the experienced qualitative researcher, to do. That is in part because as Wilber (2002, 1998) points out, there are four realms of experience that must be understood if we are to fully grasp any phenomenon. Two of these realms are objective—at the individual and collective level, and can be ‘understood’ through observation and,

frequently, quantitative measures. The other two realms are subjective, also at individual and collective levels of analysis, and can be understood only through experiencing them or being told about them by the person who is experiencing them, which is never quite as rich as the actual experience.

What the experience of a play permits that typical academic research does not, is the richness of interaction in the moment, which can be ‘experienced’ vicariously through watching the action (or even better, by participating in it as we did). Once again, the aesthetic experience, albeit inherently fraught with multiple interpretive possibilities, provides a rich *experience*, filled with emotional, intellectual, and relational content, that is hard to duplicate in academic research. Although as scholars trained to be ‘objective’ in a world where objectivity is not possible, we may resist the aesthetic, or even the personal, experience as integral to our research, if we buy into Wilber’s perspective, it becomes clear that without incorporating such an experiential component into our work, it is destined to be limited in its understanding of any given social or relational phenomenon.

In addition to informing our research, the experience of a play (and perhaps this production in particular) brings to the fore the personal experience that can contribute to the different interpretations and learning from the play. Here, the audience was skeptical regarding the “intellectual” contribution of the staged reading. Simultaneously, however, they also had an unexpected understanding of the double-edged sword of courage needed by the characters to find meaning and purpose in their work and the courage of the cast to be willing to take the risk and perform this play (Elm and Taylor 2010). This, combined with the significant personal growth of the cast as human beings through the process of rehearsals and the actual performance seems to provide a demonstration of Steve’s original premise in conducting this work.

Further, the controversy that staging the play as a division chair’s address raised helped to highlight important issues facing not just the SIM division but also larger elements of the academic enterprise. Issues of what actually is reality when there are inevitably multiple perspectives on any given event and when impacts are necessarily ambiguous can get succinctly raised and brought forward in a play in ways not always

feasible in the research context. Ethical considerations around decisions like layoffs that appear to be cut and dried or, in business language, necessary to the bottom line, are much easier to detect when a play like *Soft Targets* lets us glimpse a bit of what is going on inside the laid off individual's head. Similarly, it is easier to begin to understand broader implications for society of such decisions when we can see the craziness generated for one individual and begin to parlay that out to the social, familial, and community impacts of whole groups of people, e.g., being laid off.

A play like *Soft Targets* lets us begin to understand the dilemmas faced by decision-makers as well, who in 'real' life might not be so willing to disclose the fear, dread, and angst that they faced in making some of the decisions that the business model, financial analyst expectations, and economic considerations expect of them. Raising such issues through a creative means like a play can help highlight where research attention needs to be placed in future studies by increasing scholarly awareness of and sensitivity to factors that might not otherwise be addressed, or might easily be overlooked. Particularly in the SIM division's context, plays like this one can bring out the issues involved in managing in organizations and in those enterprises' impacts on society and the natural environment, understanding mixed motivations, understandings, and reactions (for example) of different actors in complex circumstances.

The mechanism for raising issues in this case—a play—might be controversial to some scholars and even practitioners. But to ignore the potential for learning that comes from engaging with the ambiguous material of a play can only make us smaller as scholars. Grappling with multiple interpretations of the same phenomenon, or beginning to grasp the complexity of interacting elements that go into seemingly simple decisions and their rippling impacts can only enhance our scholarly understanding of any human or social phenomenon with all its implications. The play, as a form, in a sense richly illustrates the folly of committing the 'separation fallacy' (Freeman 2000), i.e., the idea that we can divorce ethical considerations from decision making or actions, or even that somehow how theories are ethically neutral. Understanding how we as scholars react to situations and how others do through a

means like *Soft Targets* has the effect of somehow making us more human and perhaps more humane as we grapple with the reality that no one perception or interpretation is necessarily 'correct,' that multiple perspectives bear witness to any human event. If we truly hope to produce scholarship that is meaningful and impactful, perhaps we need to use many more creative means, like but certainly not limited to plays, to ensure that this very human perspective, this aesthetic sensibility, is present in much more of our work.

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