

WORK

a madcap, operatic tragi-parody of corporate America

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CHARACTERS:

LAURA L. BOSS, a real number
MICHAEL U.M., high up, but not high enough
MACKEREL M.M., gives orders, takes orders
BARRY HONEY, a gay and happy worker
MARY ANN, tight, responsible, type A
HOPE LESS, can't go on like this forever
SPEAKER OVERHEAD, the invisible C.E.O.

TIME:

The immediate present.

PLACE:

A corporation. The suggestion of rooms in a tall office building.

Scene One: The office lobby. A bare stage.
Revolving doors at stage right and left.

At rise: **LAURA L. BOSS** and **MICHAEL U.M.** stand at stage center, in mid-conversation.

LAURA L. BOSS

Adversity's good. It's strong. It's definitive.
It sends just the right amount of threat.

MICHAEL U.M.

We don't want to talk about too much adversity.
It could have the reverse effect.

LAURA L. BOSS

No. No. No. I like it.
Gets the blood circulating.

Listen.

(loud and slow and sexy)

Ad-VERS-ity.
Can't you feel it?

MICHAEL U.M.

Uh, I --

LAURA L. BOSS
(interrupting)

Nothing too extravagant.
Here and there throughout the day.

Ad-VERS-ity.

(suddenly gleeful, vulgar)

That'll put a bomb under their asses.

(Stomps her foot.)

Let's go. We're late.

(Exit **LAURA L. BOSS** and **MICHAEL U.M.**
through revolving door, stage right. Then, enter
BARRY HONEY flung in from revolving door,
stage left, followed by **MARY ANN**.)

BARRY HONEY
(bursting forth)

9-10-11-12
10-11-12-1
9-10-11-12
10-11-12-1

MARY ANN

That's the song and then it's done.

BARRY HONEY

Gotta get to work now.

BARRY HONEY and MARY ANN

Chuga Chuga Chee.

BARRY HONEY

Honesty's the best policy.

(Suddenly, from backstage left, enter **HOPE LESS**,
hair uncombed, clothes askew.)

HOPE LESS

Where have all these days gone?
Not a single image.
Not one I can think of.
I need to sleep.
No quiet place for a nap.
It's barbaric.

(suddenly cheering up, enchanted)

Blue sky breaking through leaves.

BARRY HONEY
(to **HOPE LESS**)

Oh, big deal.

(Enter **MACKEREL M.M.** from revolving door, stage
right.)

MACKEREL M.M.

Deal? Did anyone say deal?

MARY ANN and BARRY HONEY
(alternating)

Yes.
Yes.
Yes.
Yes.
Yes.
Yes.
Yes.

BARRY HONEY

9-10-11-12
11-12-1-2

MACKEREL M.M.

Music in my ears.

HOPE LESS

I have found my voice, you see.

BARRY HONEY

We're talking about work here.
You know. . . work.

MACKEREL M.M.

Yeah, work.

MARY ANN
(to **BARRY HONEY** and **MACKEREL M.M.**)

Do you love your bed?

BARRY HONEY & MACKEREL M.M.

Mm. Mm. Good.

MARY ANN

Alone in your bed?

MACKEREL M.M.
(while **BARRY HONEY** giggles)

What better way to have a bed?

MARY ANN
(suddenly punitive, to **HOPE LESS**)

Do you know the square root of ten?

HOPE LESS

Me?

BARRY HONEY

She's nothing but a rotweiler.
Nervous as hell.

MACKEREL M.M.
(to **HOPE LESS**)

The bed.
The bed.
The bed.
The bed.
The bed.

HOPE LESS

I do not need to talk to you.

BARRY HONEY

Aren't you just some kind of something?

HOPE LESS

I said:

(covering her ears)

I do not need to talk to you.
I do not need to talk to you.
I do not need to talk to you.

(All three circle around **HOPE LESS**.)

MARY ANN

Why are you so mean?

MACKEREL M.M.

Why are you so mean?

BARRY HONEY

Why are you so mean?

HOPE LESS

The truth of this situation remains to be seen.

MARY ANN & MACKEREL M.M. & BARRY HONEY

Look Hope Less, we cannot afford to start another day off on the wrong foot.

HOPE LESS

I have all I can do to keep myself from walking out to that terrace, climbing up on the railing, and jumping to my death.

(Pause.)

BARRY HONEY

You don't do your work, do you?

HOPE LESS

You have no idea what trepidation is, and you don't know in what kind of trepidation I live.

MARY ANN

HA! You think you've got complaints!
My husband didn't want me.
Years of that. Of convincing myself.
Of thinking, good, he won't give in to my vanity.

But I'm a woman and I'm beautiful.
I should be able to buy things.
I deserve to buy things.

MACKEREL M. M.

And I am accomplished.
I summarize. I analyze.
I synthesize. Theorize. Categorize.
You think that's easy?

HOPE LESS

Well, I am someone who needs many hours for contemplation.

BARRY HONEY

As if you're the only one? As if.
I need to see part of the green wall in my kitchen at least 45 minutes a day.
I have to make time for that.
Green. Do you hear me? Green.

MACKEREL M.M.

No reason to get all revved up.

MARY ANN
(into her compact)

Photos should be taken of me.
I should be remembered this way.

BARRY HONEY & HOPE LESS

Everything breaks apart in the morning.

MARY ANN

Just get a strainer. I find that if I simply strain anything I'm going to ingest right from the start I have a much brighter day. The bowels move on time, the energy is high, I never break stride, the little annoyances fade away, the petty little annoyances of other people demanding things they didn't tell you they were going to demand until they call you up on the phone after they already said they didn't want it in the first place until tomorrow but now they want it today by 3:00 and you already have an appointment at 3:00 and now you have to re-schedule everything you'd planned because this stupid mother fucking psychotic confused person wants what they want NOW.

(beat, calming down)

Why did you have to involve me in your personal feelings?

(inhales, exhales)

Your breaking apart in the morning! Just when I had the whole day under perfect control.

(beat, revving up)

Stay away from me. You and your negativity.

(Exit **MARY ANN** abruptly, through revolving door at stage right.)

MACKEREL M.M.

(eyes following her, shaking his head)

Bi-polar.

HOPE LESS

Yeah.

MACKEREL M.M.

Now. Let's get some work done.

BARRY HONEY
(marching in place)

9-10-11-12

10-11-12-1

(**MACKEREL M.M** takes a piece of paper out of his pocket.)

MACKEREL M.M

Somebody, please, revise this.

BARRY HONEY

Revision involves a process of reordering, expanding, deleting, and possibly shredding the previous document.

MACKEREL M.M.

Just do it. Now.

(AD-VERS-ITY comes booming over loudspeaker.)

(They all scatter. **BARRY HONEY** and **MACKEREL M.M.** through revolving doors at stage left and right; **HOPE LESS** backstage left.)

Blackout.

Scene Two: LAURA L. BOSS' office. A desk. A chair.

At rise: She stands alone, center stage, as the last reverberation of AD-VERS-ITY fades.

LAURA L. BOSS

(talking sexily to **SPEAKER OVERHEAD**)

Was it good for you?

(beat)

Delicious, wasn't it?

SPEAKER OVERHEAD

Take off your blouse.

LAURA L. BOSS

(breathless)

I thought you'd never ask.

(She pulls her blouse apart. The loud sound of velcro rips. She drops blouse to the floor. Enter **MICHAEL U.M.** unbeknownst to her. He takes out a stop watch; begins timing the event.)

SPEAKER OVERHEAD

Skirt.

LAURA L. BOSS

Oh. Yes.

(Again, the loud sound of velcro ripping; skirt drops to the floor. She steps out of it.)

LAURA L. BOSS

What are you wearing?

SPEAKER OVERHEAD

Suit. Tie. Wingtips.

(beat)

Feel yourself up.

(She luxuriates in the activity.)

LAURA L. BOSS

Do you want more?

(The sound of **SPEAKER OVERHEAD'S** heavy breathing.)

LAURA L. BOSS

Down?

(Weakly, **SPEAKER OVERHEAD** climaxes.)

LAURA L. BOSS

Do you want me to come?
I could do that for you.
I want to do that for you.

SPEAKER OVERHEAD

No thanks.
That's enough.

LAURA L. BOSS

But I could --

SPEAKER OVERHEAD

Back to work now.

LAURA L. BOSS

Are you sure?

SPEAKER OVERHEAD

(annoyed)

Work, I said.
Work.

LAURA L. BOSS

Yes, sir.

(**MICHAEL U.M.** clicks off stop watch; steps forward.)

MICHAEL U.M.

Two minutes. Excellent.

(as **LAURA L. BOSS** puts her clothes back on)

Time efficient. Cost efficient.
You're a real asset.

LAURA L. BOSS

Remember, you work for me.

MICHAEL U.M.

Under you. Yes. Under you.

LAURA L. BOSS

As long as it's clear.

(calling loudly)

Barry Honey?

(Enter **BARRY HONEY**, as **MICHAEL U.M.** exits.)

LAURA L. BOSS

Barry Honey, get me some coffee, will you?

BARRY HONEY

(eagerly)

Sugar. Milk.
Milk. Sugar.

LAURA L. BOSS

You always get it right, honey.
Trust your instincts.

BARRY HONEY
(counting on fingers)

5-4-3-2

LAURA L. BOSS
(going through papers at her desk)

That's right, honey. Do that.

BARRY HONEY
(as he exits)

5-4-3-2

MARY ANN
(loudly, from offstage)

Laura L. Boss?

LAURA L. BOSS

What?

MARY ANN

I need more time with this.
It's not up to snuff.

LAURA L. BOSS

Get in here.

(Enter **MARY ANN**, as if shot from a canon.)

LAURA L. BOSS

Mary Ann, how many times do I have to tell you:
Time is money. Money is time.

MARY ANN
(heaving)

But the quality --

LAURA L. BOSS
(interrupting)

I'm not interested in quality.
I want the job on my desk. Now.
And I want it right.

MARY ANN

But --

LAURA L. BOSS

(interrupting)

Look, I am not, I repeat, NOT, in the service of you.
You got that?

MARY ANN

Yes. Of course.
I'm at your service.

LAURA L. BOSS

Damn right.

(yelling)

Barry Honey???

BARRY HONEY

(from offstage)

Here I come.

(Enter **BARRY HONEY**. Puts coffee on
LAURA L. BOSS' desk.)

BARRY HONEY & MARY ANN

(heads together)

There's another problem we have to address.

LAURA L. BOSS

Pertaining to -- ?

BARRY HONEY

Hope

MARY ANN

(whispering, he starts, she finishes)

Less.

LAURA L. BOSS

Look, you're going to have to sort out your differences among yourselves.

BARRY HONEY

This is delicate.

MARYANN

Yes, delicate.

BARRY HONEY

So delicate.

BARRY HONEY & MARY ANN
(whispering loudly)

Très delicate.

LAURA L. BOSS

OK. OK. I've got the point.
What's the problem?

(beat)

Spit it out.

MARY ANN

She smells.

LAURA L. BOSS

What?

BARRY HONEY

You know, odorous.

LAURA L. BOSS

As in, what? Too much perfume?

BARRY HONEY

No. No.

MARY ANN

B.O.

BARRY HONEY

She stinks!

LAURA L. BOSS

Where are we? Sixth grade!

(takes a sip of coffee)

This coffee sucks.
Next time, get it right.

Now back to work.

MARY ANN

We can't. We're living in olfactory hell.

LAURA L. BOSS

(goes back to shuffling papers)

Room freshener. There's your answer.

Petty cash?

BARRY HONEY

Don't push me.

LAURA L. BOSS
(quick psychotic anger)

You never give us any little treats.

BARRY HONEY & MARY ANN
(whining)

I'm busy.

LAURA L. BOSS

Please?

MARY ANN

Come on. Pretty, Pretty --

BARRY HONEY

Allright. That's it. You asked for it.

LAURA L. BOSS
(yelling)

MACKEREL????

(**BARRY HONEY** and **MARY ANN** jump up and down nervously, excitedly.)

Mackerel, get in here.

LAURA L. BOSS
(voice reverberating on intercom)

(Enter **MACKEREL M.M.**, running. Stops at desk. Continues running in place.)

You called.

MACKEREL M.M.

Yes, I called.

LAURA L. BOSS
(annoyed)