

Hierarchy

Book and Lyrics: Barry Oshry
Music: Ed Key

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Power + Systems, Inc.
PO Box 990288
Boston, MA 02100-0288
www.powerandsystems.com

The Setting

A Financial Services Organization

Characters

The executives

- Harold Fine Head of the operation. An organization man who has made it up through the ranks by being the good soldier, deferential to authority, running a stable organization, avoiding trouble.
- Ralph Baldwin Head of on Sales Divison. A salesman for whom relationships are built on humor and golf.
- Richard Jackson Head of a second Sales Division. A misfit in this corporate culture, reluctant to either confront it or leave it.
- Maggie Bronton Head of Premises. A woman who has had to fight especially hard to attain executive status in this traditional "boys' club." Protective of the perquisites she has struggled for and resentful that, in a fairer world, she might have been the Head.

- Carter Newly arriving Head of Customer Service. Among the world's infectious characters; a ready smile on his face; people are good; relationships are important, and everything is possible if only bureaucracy would get out of the way.

The assistant

- Rick One of the rare surviving managers to whom Carter represents all that is good in leadership. Rick's goal is to learn from Carter and eventually be like him. Throughout the play Rick is seen as shadowing Carter and taking notes.

The workers

- Meg A high energy driver; she see Carter as her organizational savior.
- Jason A smart, shrewd, and cynical prankster.
- Bill Jason's timid puppy dog.
- Cathy Ambivalent about the place of empowerment in her work and life.

Staging and Costume

Staging and costume clearly depict hierarchy or reactions to hierarchy.

Dress

- The executives – **Fine**, **Baldwin**, and **Jackson** are dressed in blue suits, shirts, ties, black patent leather shoes. **Bronton's** dress is the female blue-suited version. **Carter** is dressed more casually, sport coat, kakhi slacks, loafers.
- The manager - **Rick** is dressed like Carter, not identical clothing but same less

formal style.

The workers are dressed most casually – no jackets or ties. Sneakers, sport shirts.

Staging

The stage is divided into two levels.

Upper Level – The officers' offices. These are plush, mahogany desks, appointments, views. Fine has a corner office. At the same level are the offices of Bronton, Baldwin, Jackson, and Carter. Baldwin and Jackson's offices can be out of sight (as around a corner or down the hall. Bronton's office (Premises), Carter's, and Fine's are in full view.

Lower Level – The workers' cubicles. The are is dark, gloomy, barren. There are four cubicles.

Act One

Opening number: **"Hierarchy"**

(All actors are initially indistinguishable from one another, dressed in identical white coveralls and masks. And they initially move and dance on the same level. Only as hierarchy becomes the "solution" to anarchy do they remove their whites revealing their hierarchical uniforms – suits versus casuals – and move to their different hierarchical levels.)

Song and dance

Hierarchy

Remember how the cave man did it,
banging on your head.

You either jumped at his command
or else were banged til dead.

You either jumped at his command
or else were banged til dead.

chorus

Many ways of organizing
attempted in the past,
so fortunate for you and I
that few of them did last.

verse

Remember how the pyramids were built
to reach up to the sky;
for every foot of altitude
two hundred men would die.
For every foot of altitude
two hundred men would die.

#1 And the collective, you do remember the collective?

#2 Oh yeh, I remember the collective.

Let's remember the collective,
to every voice we'd heed;
and how tied up we got
since not a single darned one of us dared to lead.
Since not a single darned one of us dared to lead.

#1 Well we tried.

chorus

Many ways of organizing
attempted in the past,
so fortunate for you and I
that few of them did last.
So fortunate for you and I
that few of them did last.

verse

#1 Then came freedom.

2 Ah that was a great day!

1 For a while.

Then along came freedom;
turned us loose to create;
til freedom turned to anarchy

a most unruly state.

Til freedom turned to anarchy

a most unruly state.

chorus

Many ways of organizing;

we tried them in the past;

matriarchy,

patriarchy,

here's what they're about:

some of us are winners,

the other ones are out.

Some of us are winners,

the rest of us are out.

(spoken by all)

And then they invented...

hierarchy.

As they speak 'hierarchy' the white overalls and masks come off. Workers in their casuals descend to the lower stage; executives in their suits remain on the upper stage; and Fine in his suit mounts a ladder, stands at the top, surveys the scene, and speaks.

Act I, Scene 1

FINE

(slowly and distinctly) Hierarchy.

Neat.

A system of ranking and organizing where each element of the system is subordinate to a single other element. *(pause)* Except for the top of the hierarchy. Who is subordinate to no one.

(gesturing to include the whole) This is my hierarchy. And I'm the top.

Subordinate to no one. Except when I am. There *is* the chairman, (*gesturing up*) who is subordinate to no one, except when he is. For there is the board, and then the investors. So maybe there is no top in this hierarchy. Maybe top is merely an illusion. It's just middle on top of middle on top of middle, all the way up. Then again, maybe I'm just making excuses, protecting myself. So that, when things go wrong, you won't blame me. Remember, I may look like a top, but I'm really just a middle. Of course, these folks (*gesturing downward*) they don't care about illusions. To them, I *am* the top. Subordinate to no one. Responsible for it all. Moving down the hierarchy, here are my officers (*gestures to them surrounding the ladder*), each responsible for his and her piece of the whole. In their arenas, *they* are top...except when they're not. So you see, that's how it is in my hierarchy, neatly organized and ranked all the way down and all the way up. (*introducing*) The officers.

Maggie Bronton. Head of Facilities.

Ralph Baldwin, Head of Group Sales.

Richard Jackson, Head of Individual Sales.

and Dan Rayburn. Hmm. Up to now Dan has headed up Customer Service.

(The others look over at RAYBURN with disdain. An offstage angry voice.)

Take Rayburn out and shoot him!

(RAYBURN is shaken.)

FINE

(indicating the offstage voice) That's Delaney. A major investor in our organization. As you note, Delaney is not especially happy with Customer Service.

(offstage)

Happy? I said *Shoot him!*

(RAYBURN gestures 'enough,' shakes hands with the other officers, waves to FINE, and walks off.)

FINE

So Dan is leaving Customer Service. (*irony*) Heading off to his much-deserved and long-delayed retirement. Hunting and fishing and golfing in his beloved Maine. Spending more time with the family. All of that. We'll miss him.

(offstage)

The hell we will.

FINE

(waves it off) So now there's a hole to fill in my hierarchy. And here's what I've been thinking. (*waving to the distance*) Downtown we have a smaller Customer Service operation. It's all by itself down there, and doing just fine. A chap I used to work with – name of John Carter – has taken it over and really turned it around. So I say: if John can do it there, why not do it here? Simple enough, and I do like simple solutions. So there it is. My hierarchy.

(FINE begins to make his way down the ladder, when there is an apologetic voice from the darkened worker area.)

WORKER VOICE

Excuse me, Mr. Fine, but you didn't introduce us.

FINE

(Still on the ladder, peers down, can't see the workers, is embarrassed that he has overlooked them. To himself.)

Damn! It's not as if I *want* not to see them. I just don't. Of course I know they're there. There's just so much else to think about. What with competition and regulations and new technologies and globalization. It's just too easy *not* to see. *(now continuing his monologue)* Sorry. Of course. Our workers. The heart of the business. Our most valuable asset. They complete our hierarchy. If I'm the top, they're the bottom. *(embarrassed)* Of course we don't call them Bottoms. They're

Associates, you know, all part of Team One. Essential. *(still can't see them)* So there you have it. My hierarchy.

(He descends and joins his officers. They mill around as the lights go down on the upper stage; the ladder is pulled off to the side; the lights come up dimly in the lower stage worker area. The workers enter slowly, heads down, nod to one another, and plop themselves down in their cubicles. They begin their work in desultory fashion, shuffling papers from one pile to another, toying with the phone. There is occasional action unrelated to work: MEG rises, does a few karate moves, then sits; BILL plays soundlessly on his harmonica; JASON appears to be sleeping at his desk; CATHY is reading a textbook and taking notes. There are spurts of "work": The phone rings soundlessly, MEG answers it, shrugs, shakes her head and hangs up; JASON wakes and moves papers from one pile to another. A light follows JOHN CARTER as he enters; he remains in the area interacting with the workers, leaving only as he joins the executives. The area goes dark and lights come up in FINE'S office.)

(Fine's office is set for some sort of celebration. On his desk is a bottle of champagne and six champagne flutes along with a plate of canapés. Present are Fine, Bronton, Baldwin, and Jackson. Fine, Baldwin, and Jackson are wearing their identical blue suits with minimal variations in shirt and tie color and patterns. Bronton is wearing a man-tailored blue suit. Fine takes off his jacket and puts it is over the back of his chair; the others keep their jackets on. Fine stands by his desk; the others, with the exception of Jackson, hover nearby. Jackson is off alone, stage right, less engaged in the conversation than the others.)

FINE

(tapping on a glass to get the others' attention)

Well, people, as you know, this hasn't been our best year...*(depressed)* in fact, it's been our *worst* in twenty years.

BRONTON

(sympathetic) It's been hard on all of us, Harold.

BALDWIN

(defensive) Not like we didn't give it our best, boss.

FINE

I know, I know. No one's blaming you.

BALDWIN

It's been tough dealing with the customers. When the money's rolling in, it's like you're their best friend. Then the market tanks, and it's like it's *your* fault. We keep up the contact, calls, birthday cards. My people are organizing a golf tournament. We'll see. Nothing seems to cut through. It's like we broke something and now it's beyond repair. No more friend; now I'm just one more salesman who made big promises and then broke them.

FINE

(somber) You can understand. It's *their* money; nobody likes to lose *their* money.

BRONTON

(the superior voice of reason) Patience. It'll come back. It always does. *(turning to Fine, upbeat)* Given the dreary times, Harold, I must say you were more than generous with our bonuses. Very sweet of you, really. *(Fine blushes.)*

ALL

(except Jackson still off to the side)

Hear, hear! *(a clinking of glasses)*

FINE

(walks over to Jackson, puts his arm around him, fatherly)

And you, Richard, were you unhappy with *your* bonus?

JACKSON

Oh no sir. Sorry, sir. It was *very* generous. I appreciate it...really...it's just that...uh...given the downturn, I wasn't expecting...a bonus...more like...

BALDWIN

(with a not too gentle punch to the shoulder) More like joining Rayburn for hunting and fishing in his beloved Maine, right kid?

JACKSON

(smiles uncomfortably to Baldwin, speaks to Fine) I really do appreciate the bonus, Mr. Fine. I didn't mean to...

FINE

It's still *mister* Fine. How long have you been with us, Richard? What is it, three years?

JACKSON

Five, actually.

FINE

And it's still *Mister Fine*.

JACKSON

Sorry, sir.

BRONTON

(Reaching for Jackson's hand which furthers his discomfort) Good old-fashioned manners, Harold. Can't fault a man for that. Little enough respect for authority these days.

FINE

Still, Richard does bring up a reasonable question. Why such generous bonuses when the results have been so dismal? *(to Bronton)* Sam Colson, you remember him?

BRONTON

A real man. *(There's meaning behind this.)*

FINE

Hell of a contributor. Lifetime Chairman's Award. When I was a new manager, Sam took me aside, gave me a piece of advice I've never forgotten: Take care of your men, Harold, he said. In good times, *but mostly in the bad*. Take care of your men, and when you need them, your men will be there for you. *(beat)* These bonuses are not about results.

BALDWIN

Thank the good Lord for that.

BRONTON

(to all) Well, it's good to be beneficiaries of Sam's wisdom...*(to Fine)* and yours, Harold. *(beat)* A toast. *(the getting and filling of glasses)* To Sam Colson, and Harold Fine. Two generous men. And two thoughtful leaders.

ALL

Hear, hear!

(As they drink, John Carter enters. His dress is in sharp contrast to the others: sport jacket, shirt, no tie, khaki slacks, loafers. Carter is brimming with enthusiasm.)

CARTER

Sorry to be late. *(shaking hands all around while talking)* Talking with the service people. Got caught up. *(enthusiasm)* Good conversations.

BALDWIN

(*amazed*) Good conversations? All we ever hear from Customer Service is whining and complaining.

CARTER

(*shaking his head*) Uh uh. There's potential there. Just have to get beneath the surface. Listen to them. *Really* listen.

(*Baldwin appears affronted. What, I don't know how to really listen?*)
CARTER *rubs his hands, oblivious to Baldwin.*)

This is going to be fun.

FINE

(*to Carter with some disappointment*) I thought *I* would take you down, John. Introduce you. More formally, you know.

CARTER

It was better this way. Just me and them. You know...without the trappings of hierarchy.

(*This gets Bronton's attention. In the dialogue that follows, Bronton is both surprised and curious. Is this a breath of fresh air or something dangerous?*)

BRONTON

The *trappings* of hierarchy?

CARTER

The kind of nonsense that separates us.

BRONTON

Uh huh. (*gesturing to Carter's informal attire*) You seem fairly free of the *trappings* of hierarchy.

CARTER

Cuts down on the We-versus-Them. Don't you agree?

BRONTON

I'm not sure I ever think of We *versus* Them. Still, isn't there *something* to maintaining the difference...like parent and child. There needs to be some distinction *there*, don't *you* agree?

CARTER

Surely you don't see *us* as parents and *them* as children.

BRONTON

No...yet, there *is* some of that to it, don't you think?

CARTER

(*dismissively, while still smiling*) I can't imagine what.

(tense pause)

FINE

(uncomfortable, breaks the tension) Yes, yes. Well, the two of you will have *lots* of opportunity to debate these...uh...what, *philosophical* issues. *(Beat. To the others.)* John and I go way back in the company. *(laughs)* High potentials we were.

CARTER

It's been some time, Harold.

(There's a hesitation as Fine is struck with some unpleasant memory.)

FINE

Well, here you are. *(to the others)* John's been brought over from downtown. Performed miracles there. Turned around the whole Customer Service operation. Even saw a bit of a profit.

BRONTON

Impressive, John. Can't remember the last time we saw anything but aggravation from downtown. Good for you!

(She leads the light applause.)

FINE

Brought in some new thinking. *(waving into the air as if that is where these concepts reside.)* Empowerment. Teams. Don't understand a bit of it. But, if it worked there, I say: let's give it a shot here, because customer service here is one stinking mess.

BALDWIN

Delaney says we ought to find whoever's in charge of customer service...

FINE

(cutting him off) Yes, yes. We all know about shooting. *(trying for humor in mock leadership)* Let me assure you, John, Shooting is out, definitely out. *(uncomfortable shuffling, looking into empty glasses.)* But, Customer Service *does* need help. And, in my judgment, John Carter is our man for the job. So let us at last give a warm welcome and best wishes for success to John Carter!

(more light applause, filling of glasses)

ALL

To John Carter! Hear hear!

BRONTON

(first in line, very close, shaking Carter's hand warmly) Welcome, John. Any way I can help, you'll let me know.

CARTER

Appreciate it.

BALDWIN

(Next in line, gives Carter the crunching he-man handshake; Carter winces.) Empowerment. That where everyone does whatever the heck he wants? *(knowing wink)* That the picture, John boy?

CARTER

It's a bit more complex, you see...

(Baldwin walks off, having already lost interest. They drink their champagne, mill about, chatting. Carter clinks his glass to get the others' attention.)

CARTER

(big confident smile as he raises his glass)

My friends. First let me say how much I appreciate this gracious reception. And I know just how important customer service is to you. So here's my promise. Six months. Just give me six months, and you will not recognize Customer Service. Customer Service will be *the* jewel of this operation.

BRONTON

The jewel?

(tense pause)

FINE

(uncomfortable, to Brnton) I'm sure John means: one of *many* jewels. *(beat)* Isn't that right, John?

CARTER

(not responding to Fine) Six months, folks. That's a promise. And I keep my promises.

(lights)

Act I, Scene 2

(Workers Jason, Meg, Bill, and Cathy are in their cubicles. Bill is playing his harmonica; Cathy is doing school homework, Meg is practicing martial arts moves while checking with an instruction manual; Jason is poring over a chart. As Carter enters, the workers scramble trying to look busy.)

CARTER

(the enthusiastic coach) Listen up. Everybody. Meeting in my office.

(He starts toward his office, the others don't move. They look this way and that. It's clear they've never been "upstairs.")

MEG

Do we have permission?

CARTER

(incredulous) To leave your cubicle?

BILL

(staying within the line while showing Carter the rule book)

Not without our manager's permission. It's in the rules.

(Carter takes the book, glances through it, and tosses it away.)

CARTER

We won't need that.

(Bill frantically tries to retrieve the rule book while not leaving his cubicle.)

BILL

But our manager said...

CARTER

We probably won't need your manager either.

(This gets Jason's attention.)

JASON

Now *there's* an interesting thought. How would we ever survive?

CARTER

(looking over the operation)

Help me understand this operation. *(to Meg)* What do you do?

MEG

Work the phones. It's usually a customer complaint. Used to be I'd try to handle it. Mostly I couldn't. Then upstairs came up with this new scheme. Customers didn't like waiting on the phone, so I needed to speed things up. Now I'm measured on how *fast* I handle the calls.

CARTER

So?

MEG

So here's my new M.O.. *(picks up the phone, perky delivery)* Good morning, Customer Service. This is Meg. How may I transfer your call? *(slams down the phone.)* That's it. I'm done. Quick. *My* numbers are great.

JASON

And my numbers stink. Her calls keep piling up here.

CARTER

And?

JASON

Hey, I try to do my best, but...

CARTER

But?

JASON

Mostly I don't know what they're talking about. There's always new stuff we don't understand. Nobody tells us...

CARTER

Customers must love this.

JASON

You get used to it. The swearing, name calling, threats, slammed phones, hate mail. It's all in a day's work.

(The phone rings; Meg answers, signals to Jason that it's for him. Jason talks animatedly but secretly on the phone; he makes notes on the chart he's been working on. The conversation ends; Jason is pumped.)

CARTER

Now *that* sounded exciting. What was *that* about?

JASON

(uncomfortable) Nothing special.

(The others are laughing. They stop. Uncomfortable silence.)

CARTER

(Waves it off.) O.K., I don't need to know.

(a sigh of relief from Jason. Beat.)

Folks, here's the picture I get from upstairs. Upstairs says that Customer Service is the trash pit of this organization. The dumps. The dregs. Upstairs says you are a bunch of brainless, incompetent, nincompoops. Upstairs says this operation is hopeless. And here's the bottom line. Upstairs says that one of your customers wants to shoot whoever is in charge of Customer Service.

JASON

(facetious) Now that sounds serious.

CARTER

You bet it is, Jason, since *I'm* the one who's in charge of Customer Service. So, you see. This gives us a focus. Something we can rally around. A mission. *(pause)* *Keep me alive!*

(They are puzzled by this guy.)

CATHY

OK. I'll play along. So how do we keep you from being shot?

CARTER

Prior question. Do you *want* to keep me from being shot?

MEG

(enthusiasm) Oh absolutely! I just hate the sight of blood.

CATHY

"Keep Carter alive." As a mission statement, it does have some zip.

JASON

Hey, it beats the current motto: *(ponderously)* "Our family is here to serve your family."

CATHY

Known in these parts as: "From our dysfunctional family to yours."

JASON

OK, so I'll go along...but just for now.

BILL

(With little understanding or enthusiasm) Me too...I guess.

CARTER

So that's your job: to turn this whole operation around. From failure to success. From loss to profit. From trash pit to shining jewel. And then I'm saved.

JASON

A piece of cake.

BILL

This is way over my head. How are we supposed to do all this?

CARTER

Knowledge...Courage...Freedom...Challenge...Growth...Courage

BILL

You already said courage.

CARTER

It's a big one.

(pause, heavy thinking going on)

MEG

(to Carter) Could we talk?

CARTER

That's the purpose of this meeting.

JASON

I believe she means...without you.

CARTER

(dismisses them.) Go.

(Meg, Bill, Cathy, and Jason huddle. The conversation is animated. There is a "dance" here in which members are wrestling with the choice: grow or go. In the end, the decision is made; the workers are holding one another and rocking together in mock imitation of a sports team pumping itself up before the game.)

MEG

Jason has something to say.

BILL

About that phone call.

JASON

Well...

MEG

(to Carter) You see, we've had lots of spare time.

BILL

Between the calls and all. So,,,uh

JASON

O.K., so..uh...in my spare time...(spits it out) I've been managing a fantasy football league.

CARTER

(interested) How many teams?

JASON

(puzzled by Carter's interest) Sixteen.

CARTER

(impressed) A complex job, am I right? (Jason nods.) Complexity, that's promising.

(Jason is puzzled by Carter's reaction.)

MEG

I've been working on my moves. (She performs a martial arts maneuver.)

CARTER

(approving) Assertiveness. That's good. It will come in handy.

(continuing puzzlement)

CATHY

I'm working on my degree. Two courses to go.

CARTER

(nods) Good. Learning is good. We'll need lots of learning.

(They all look to Bill who has nothing to offer. Then he reaches inside his pocket, pulls out his harmonica and begins to play.)

BILL

(enthusiastic) I've been practicing my harmonica.

(Carter struggles, unsuccessfully, to find some promising connection, finally...)

CARTER

Hmm, I'm sure it'll fit in somewhere. (beat, then enthusiasm) All in all, I'd say we have the foundations of a great team.

(The workers are puzzled.)

CARTER

Let's get started.

(Carter leads the workers up to his office; they move tentatively, Bill particularly, as if this is dangerous territory. They are awed at the opulence of the offices. In the interaction that follows there will be two simultaneous transformations occurring as both the Workers and the Executives experience the implications of Carter's plans.)

CARTER

Let's start with the problems.

CATHY

Managers.

JASON

Not around when you need them. And when they *are* around you wish they were somewhere else. One manager gives you one story, another tells you something completely different.

CARTER

We're going to get rid of managers.
(Rick enters.)

Meet Rick. Your coach.

MEG

Coach? What's a coach?

JASON

(cynical) A coach is a manager by another name. Like Team One is a spruced-up term for... grunts.

CARTER

Uh uh. Rick is no manager. His job is to teach you how to manage yourselves. Then he's gone and you're on your own. No more managers.

(The following interactions are presto presto, fast responsive dialogue.)

<u>WORKERS</u>	<u>MANAGERS</u>
	BALDWIN <i>(shaken)</i> I've got 22 managers. Good people. I'm not getting rid of anybody.
MEG Manage ourselves? Is it possible?	
CARTER	

If you manage your life, you can manage this job.

MEG

I'm not sure.

CARTER

You'll get help. You'll learn

BALDWIN

(to Jackson) And you? What about *your* managers?

CARTER

What else?

CATHY

Our jobs are stupid. We're in a black hole. There's no big picture. How anything connects with anything else.

CARTER

We'll expand your jobs. You'll be able to see projects through from beginning to end.

MEG

That could be challenging.

BILL

That could be scary.

CARTER

Courage, Bill. Courage

JACKSON

That could be interesting.

BALDWIN

Are *my* people going to expect *expanded* jobs?

CARTER

What else?

MEG

We ask for information or direction or tools, and either *nothing* comes or there are delays or excuses...

JASON

Or we get loads of what we didn't ask for.

CARTER

What if you didn't have to ask? What if you were free to go wherever you needed to go, to get whatever you needed to get?

CATHY

(skeptical) Like getting out of jail. You're free to go *anywhere*, but who knows *where* to go?

CARTER

You'll learn.

BRONTON

Oh, great. Are they all going to be scampering around here like a pack of mice?

BILL

What if *they (pointing to the offices)* won't let us?

CARTER

If you don't stop you, they can't stop you.

BRONTON

We'll see.

CARTER

What else?

MEG

I would *love* to be able to pick up the phone and *help* someone. *Really help someone.*

CARTER

You will, Meg. You will learn all the products. When a customer calls, it will be one stop shopping. You take it from beginning to end.

Wow!	MEG	BALDWIN This tosses everything up for grabs: job descriptions, pay schedules. Who needs this? Why is he doing this?
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JASON
You're making too much of this, man. This is just a job.

CARTER
Jason, if this was just about a job, I wouldn't be here. The job is the place, the setting. It could be anywhere. This is about how you choose to live your life. Here, anywhere. What'll you be? Big? Or small? *That's* your choice.

This makes me nervous.	BILL	BALDWIN This makes <i>you</i> nervous.
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CATHY
What if it's too big for me?

CARTER
It's not about you alone. It's about building all of you into a team. With teamwork you can do everything, solve every problem, overcome every obstacle.

	JACKSON <i>(thoughtful)</i> I've never thought about <i>teams</i> .	BALDWIN Teams! How do you evaluate <i>teams</i> ? My whole system is built around <i>individual</i> performance. What's a <i>team</i> ?
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JASON
Are you for real, man?

CARTER
Listen to me. All of you. You may not feel it yet, but trust me; it will come. You are magnificent. Just give yourselves the chance to show what you really are.

MEG
(pointing to the worker space below)

In that dump?

CARTER

Change it. Make it yours.

MEG

We have no meeting room.

CARTER

Use my office.

MEG <i>(disbelieving)</i> Your office?	
CARTER My office.	BRANTON <i>(outraged)</i> HIS OFFICE! DID HE SAY: USE HIS OFFICE!

BIG BANG

The Transformation

The transformation occurs over a six month period. The "Get Carter" song is background. There are a number of set pieces each lasting no more than thirty seconds and each ended by a rhythmic worker CLAP. The flashing of lights between each set indicates the passing of time.

<p>"Get Carter" Verse Just you wait by and by for the good news is coming with this big smiley guy from headquarters he's a'slumming</p> <p>He's bringing us the testament to brighten up our day They're calling it empowerment it's showing us the way.</p> <p>Chorus Now is the time to get Carter Yes it's time to get Carter</p>	<p>Set #1 Workers re-shape their area, take down barriers, create open space, bring in personal objects, posters. The set ends with workers looking over the new space with some satisfaction, and CLAP</p> <p>Set #2 Coach Rick places thick manuals on each of the workers' desk. The workers begin to plough through the manuals, ask questions, Rick points out where the information</p>
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Oh you know we need Carter today.

Everybody
Now it's the time to get Carter
Don't you know we need Carter.
John Carter will show us the way.

Verse

He'll enhance your education
Yes he's gonna treat you right.
In blinding illumination
He'll provide you system sight.
On behalf of liberation
he's committed to the right
For every worker's salvation
he's prepared to mount a fight.

Chorus

Now it's time to get Carter...

Verse

So pay attention to the man
cause he's big on people growin,
See him comin' with a plan
cause he knows new winds are
blowin'.
He can take a thankless job
turn it into a career
And from sad and faceless mobs
thriving workers will appear.

Chorus

(to the end of the scene.)

is; they continue to study. and
CLAP

Set #3

Meg stands before an easel and
newsprint. Seated in front of her
are the other workers and
Jackson. She is teaching some
new procedure. Scene ends with
worker applause, a thumbs up
from Jackson, and
CLAP

Set #4

Cathy distributes a newsletter she
has prepared. The workers study
it, express approval, and indicate
that they will distribute them.
CLAP

Set #5

Coach Rick is leading a phone
skills seminar. Workers together
mime phone conversations, hang-
ups, phone conversations. Rick
applauds.
CLAP

Set #6

Bill and Jason transform Carter's
office into a conference room
much to Bronton's horror. The
scene ends with Meg bringing in a
poster from the Jimmy Carter
presidential campaign modified to
read "John Carter for President."
CLAP

Set #7

Bill teaching. He is hesitant to get
to the front of the room. Rick
works with him urging Bill
forward. Bill begins hesitantly,
then continues with some
confidence. Workers applaud.
CLAP

Set #8

Fine and a corporate big wig are at a team presentation conducted by Meg and Cathy. The big wig is clearly impressed. The scene ends as he offers vigorous handshakes to the two of them.

CLAP

Scene #9

Team building. The last set is timed to the final chorus of "Get Carter." Workers are up and dancing together. As the song ends, they collapse in exhaustion.

Act I, Scene 3

(Six months have passed. The scene opens to the music of Customer Service. Meg is at her desk, with computer, on the phone dealing with a customer. Bill and Jason are working in Carter's upstairs office drawing a schedule on the easel pad. Carter is in his downstairs cubicle office talking with CathY. Bronton and Baldwin are meeting with Fine in his office. As the music cuts, we hear Meg.)

MEG

(chipper, customer friendly)

Yes, sir. Checking that right now. *(Checks the computer.)* There it is, Mr. Allan, your cash value at the present moment. *(pause)* Yes sir, it is quite a change. No more passing you around from pillar to post. I can handle it all right from here. *(listening)* I'm sure you do. And, Mr. Allan, I'm going to fax you over some suggestions the agents have made regarding your account. See what you think. I'll get back to you early next week. *(listening)* Fine. Anything else I can do for you? *(listening)* Just one second, sir, let me get that information.

(Listening, she continues to work with the customer while humming a few verses of Customer Service, no accompaniment. Jason and Bill pick up and join the humming. Back to customer.)

That ought to take care of it, sir. *(listens)* Yes, sir, and it's been a real pleasure working with you. Bye bye.

MEG

(Hops out of her seat, performs one of her martial arts maneuvers, and shouts excitedly) I LOVE THIS JOB!

(Bill and Jason stop their work, come toward her as the music comes up, and she starts to sing.)

Meg: Tired of being on hold,
Afraid you'll grow old
Before anyone answers your question.
Bill: We understand
Jason: Let us take you in hand
B&J: And offer you this suggestion:

Chorus:

All: Come to us!
Come to us!
We're Customer Service
Meg: The heart of the business
B&J: We're the reason the customers stay.
All: We're Customer Service,
We won't make you nervous,
We'll make all your pain go away.

Bill: They send you to this one
Jason: Who sends you to that one
B&J: Who doesn't know why you are there.
Meg: You thought you were special
B/M: A person essential
All: They just want you out of their hair.

Jason: Tired of lame excuses
Bill: Finding them useless
B/J: Words babble out of their mouth.
Meg: The minutes you're counting
B/J: Your anger is mounting
All: Watching your project go south.

Chorus:

All: Come to us!
Come to us!
We're Customer Service
The heart of the business,
We're the reason the customers stay.
We're Customer Service,
We won't make you nervous,
We'll make all your pain go away.
Let us make all your pain go away!

(Meg ends with a karate flourish.)

(The workers get back to work. Carter has been watching them, big smile. He heads back to his cubicle where he is joined by Fine.)

Interval

(Meanwhile Jason, carrying some fliers, bumps into Bronton. Jason is enthusiastic; Bronton is eager to move past him. Jason succeeds in keeping her from moving on.)

JASON

Hya, Ms. Bronton! Have a minute?

BRONTON

Not really. A meeting...

JASON

Just a sec. *(Forces a flyer into Bronton's reluctant hands.)* Next Tuesday's seminar. Love to have you there. Some of your people too.

BRONTON

(perfunctory, like you know it's not going to happen.) We'll check calendars.

JASON

New stuff on marketing. Brilliant stuff. Mr. Carter put us on to it.

BRONTON

Mr. Carter? How nice.

JASON

Can't afford to miss it, Ms. Bronton. Might even learn some new tricks yourself. Never too old to learn.

BRONTON

I'm sure. Now may I go?

JASON

(enthusiastic)

On your way. Just remember: Tuesday. Be there.

(Bronton walks off, glancing over the flyer, crunches it into a ball, looks for a place to throw it, tosses it to the ground, can't believe that she did that, picks it up, walks off muttering: Never too old to learn.)

* * *

(Carter and Fine in Carter's cubicle.)

CARTER

(the proud host) What do you think?

FINE

(sincere) Impressive.

CARTER

(enthusiasm) They're a great bunch. I am touched. That presentation they made to

corporate!

FINE

You've done quite a job with them, John. The VP kept babbling on about the commitment, the can-do attitude.

CARTER

Does he ever wonder why he doesn't see more of that commitment and can-do attitude in the rest of the company?

FINE

Am I about to get another Carter lecture on the evils of hierarchy?

CARTER

You just have to give them the tools, the training, the challenge. You have to show them you *believe* in them.

FINE

I guess I am.

CARTER

There's nothing fancy about this, Harold. People *want* to make a difference. You just have to let them. That's all there is. (*beat*) I could turn this whole company around.

FINE

You could?

(*tense moment*)

CARTER

(*embarrassed*) We could...this way

(*pause*)

FINE

Uh. (*He studies Carter's cubicle, then points to his upstairs office*) Your office; you're not using it, are you?

CARTER

No.

FINE

This is your office.

CARTER

Uh huh.

FINE

Cute.

CARTER

Works better this way.

FINE

(perfunctory) I'm sure it does. *(beat)* You understand, John, that some of your... *colleagues* take *their* offices very seriously.

CARTER

I'm sure they do. The mahogany, the color-coordinated fabrics. The view. The art. What good does any of it do? *(dismissive)* Nonsense.

FINE

(reasoned) John, they've worked hard for that nonsense: the view, the mahogany desk, the color-coordinated fabrics. All that *stuff* you don't seem to care about.

CARTER

And you, Harold? How much do you really care about it?

FINE

(hesitates, smiles) You're a puzzle, John. You've always been a puzzle.

CARTER

How do I justify spending twenty thousand dollars on a fancy office when I can't afford to upgrade the computers my people need? What's the message I'd be sending?

FINE

We're always sending messages, John. Think about the message you're sending your...colleagues?

CARTER

This isn't about *them*. This is me doing what I need to do for my people, and for customer service. And, for God's sake, they ought to be looking at the *results*.

(Fine shrugs.)

The numbers. This operation was a loser.

FINE

I know, John.

CARTER

And *they* know. Year after year. Two million one year, five million another. Now...

FINE

(impatient) I know, John. I *do* read the figures.

CARTER

That's *all* that ought to matter.

FINE

Talk to them, John.

(The two men stand in silence; Carter is hesitant to speak, turns away, then back to Fine.)

CARTER

(hesitant) It's not just *them*. *(beat)* Where are you, Harold? Are *you* behind me?

FINE

(uncomfortable with this turn) Me?

CARTER

You're the *boss*. It makes a difference.

FINE

(continued discomfort) This is *your* show, John, not mine. I took the risk bringing you over; that was *my* part. Now it's up to you. *You* need to help them understand what you're trying to do here. Tuesday's staff meeting. We could make room on the agenda.

(painful pause)

CARTER

I'll be in Washington Tuesday.

FINE

(sarcasm) Another speech?

CARTER

National Conference. Teams for Total Quality.

FINE

I thought that was last week.

CARTER

Last week was the university...MBA students. Lot of interest there in what we're doing.

FINE

Uh huh.

CARTER

A faculty member. Doing a case study of our success. A chapter in a book. *(noting Fine's lack of enthusiasm.)* It'll be good for the company. *All* these talks are good for the company. You know...

FINE

I'm sure. *(beat)* what about Rick? Couldn't *he* do the Washington talk? He's your right-hand man. In from the get-go. Deep into this team business. A survivor of the

Great Manager Massacre. Terrific credentials for that kind of presentation.

CARTER

(feeling cornered) It wouldn't work. He's never done anything like it.

FINE

(irony) You're not saying he's not smart enough, are you? Not enough of that *can-do* attitude?

CARTER

That's not it.

FINE

(continued irony) Wouldn't this be another...*development* opportunity. I know you're big on development opportunities.

CARTER

Rick's time will come; this isn't it. *(beat)* They want to hear from...from the creator. *(He knows he shouldn't have used that word.)*

FINE

The *creator*. Nice.

CARTER

(flustered) You know what I mean.

FINE

I believe I do. *(begins to leave.)* Just one thing, Mr. Creator. Try to remember: You are not the General Manager. Do try to remember *me*.

(Fine leaves. Carter cringes, like he's blown it.)

*

ACT I, Scene 4

(Bill and Jason are in Carter's upstairs office. Jason is enjoying himself, sitting in a plush executive chair, feet up on Carter's desk, miming smoking a cigar, while studying a thick syllabus.)

(Bronton walks by, stares in disgust, brings Baldwin over to take in the scene; the two buzz together commiserating; they walk off.)

BILL

(pacing) So now what? Premises is just not going to deal with us.

JASON

(slapping down the syllabus) Something's going on. I don't get it. Suddenly a sign is tying us up. *(shaking his head, thumbing through the syllabus)* Look at all this stuff. New policies to get under our belt. Training programs to develop.

BILL

(clowning) Not like the good old days. *(Mimes slowly moving papers from one pile to another, stamping each along the way.)*

JASON

A damn sign! ENERGIZERS. *(puzzled)* Peculiar.

BILL

Maybe we're pushing her too hard. Maybe we should just forget about the sign.

JASON

It's her attitude. That's what was so strange. Always the classy dame...and now this: a snide bitch.

BILL

We could make our own sign. Why bother her? It's a policy, she says. They just make signs for departments. So we're not a department. So let it go.

JASON

Uh, uh. Doesn't feel right.

BILL

(nervous) Why do you want to make a fight out of this? It's nothing; it's trivial. And she seemed really pissed.

JASON

She pisses easily lately. That's the puzzle.

BILL

We could get fired.

JASON

Don't be stupid.

BILL

Well we *could*.

JASON

We're not gonna get fired.

BILL

I don't see the harm it would do to forget about the sign. Jesus, Jason, just let it go.

(pause. Jason paces. Gets a thought. Is enthused; smiles broadly)

JASON

I got it. *(whispers into Bill's ear.)*

BILL

(shocked) Oh no, man. You wouldn't.

JASON

Not me. We!

(Jason pulls Bill in close, and they conspire.)

ACT I, Scene 5

(Carter/Cathy in Carter's cubicle. Carter is seated; Cathy is standing, facing away from him. She is tense. As this conversation is going on, we see but do not hear Meg in heated interaction upstairs with Baldwin. In the middle of the Cathy/Carter scene, we hear Meg shout dammit as she leaves Baldwin's office.)

CARTER

(gently) Cathy...come, sit down...Talk to me.

CATHY

(fearful, hesitant, shaking her head) No...I'm afraid.

CARTER

To *talk to me*? You and I have always been able to talk.

CATHY

You'll try to talk me out of it.

CARTER

(baffled) What are we talking about?

CATHY

(worn down) I just can't handle it.

CARTER

(bright) What? There's nothing you can't handle. You're handling everything... beautifully. You're a star. For God's sake, you're what this whole new way is about.

CATHY

(angry) I hate this whole new way!

(Carter is stunned.)

I hate it...it's killing me...it's destroying my life. The worry, the responsibility. This is not what I need. Not now. *(shaking her head)*

CARTER

What can I do to help?

(MEG from upstairs: DAMMIT!)

CATHY

Going home at night. No rest. Can't sleep. Worrying. Afraid. What have I missed? Forgotten. Done wrong. *(beat)* Now there are the new policies, the new premium schedules...I just can't keep up.

CARTER

Ask for help, Cathy. Don't suck this all up to yourself. Look to your team.

CATHY

(non-responsive) On top of it all comes the Delaney account!

CARTER

(This last worries him.) The Delaney account! You were excited about the Delaney account. A chance for your team to shine.

CATHY

I was wrong. Delaney is tough. He's a mean man. Demanding.

CARTER

Of course he's demanding. There's big money involved.

CATHY

That's what scares me. Big money. I could screw up *big*. *(beat)* I never had that feeling before. Used to be I could screw up little, no one would notice.

CARTER

Cathy, you're not going to screw up. If I thought for a minute you were going to screw up, I would never have turned that account over to your team. *(Carter stands, paces, points to the upstairs offices.)* Cathy, upstairs, they're looking at us. You know that. Some of them are hoping to see us fall flat on our behinds.

CATHY

I'm sorry.

CARTER

Delaney is key. *(beat)* I never told you, Cathy, but I took a *big* risk turning Delaney over to your team.

CATHY

I'm sorry.

CARTER

They said it was too important...too big...too complex for a frontline team to handle. I told them they were wrong.

CATHY

Maybe they weren't wrong.

CARTER

Dammit, Cathy, they *were* wrong. This is at the heart of the story. Don't you see it?

CATHY

It's just one account. Give it back.

CARTER

It's not one account. It's the whole enchilada. It's how they justify taking the big bucks for themselves, and sprinkling the peanuts for you. Don't you see that? *(beat)* They need to believe that you're too stupid to handle the big stuff.

CATHY

I want my old job back. I want my life back.

CARTER

(weary) Cathy, that job doesn't exist.

CATHY

I'm afraid. I was never afraid before. Not in my old job.

CARTER

Who's not afraid? You think *I'm* not afraid? *(beat)* Cathy, you step to the edge, and you're afraid. That's how it is. That's what this is all about. Back away and you'll *always* be afraid. Step forward, Cathy, and you'll fly. I *know* you can fly.

CATHY

(suddenly angry) Why do I have to be afraid? What is the big *deal* about being afraid? What's wrong with being peacefully, comfortably bored? *(shaking her head)* I'm sorry. I've made up my mind. *(She rises to leave.)*

CARTER

Cathy, this is one of those critical moments in a person's life. Think carefully. Choose wisely. (Cathy *shakes her head and continues out.*) At least talk it over with your team. (beat, as she's out the door) Oh, and Cathy, *please* give some thought to Delaney. We just can't leave him hanging.

*

ACT I, Scene 6

(Cathy leaves, Meg enters)

CARTER

(*enthusiastic open-armed welcome*) Great work on the phones, Meg.

MEG

(*She gives her triumphant chop, then shakes her head.*) Customers are not my problem. (*deep breath, pointing upstairs*) Baldwin's my problem. (*Baldwin and Bronton have their heads together in Bronton's office.*)

CARTER

More of the same. (*There's something in his tone as if he's relishing this.*)

MEG

You need to talk to him.

CARTER

Uh uh

MEG

He won't listen to me. He insists on talking with you. He says it's...it's *inappropriate* for me to be dealing with him.

CARTER

Ridiculous.

MEG

So it's ridiculous. But why fight it? Couldn't you...

CARTER

Uh uh.

MEG

Just this once. (*pause*) They're nibbling away at me. Trivial stuff, wearing me down.

CARTER

(*as much to himself*) That appears to be the strategy.

MEG

We've worked so hard on this "New Policies" training session. You know me, I need to make it perfect.

CARTER

It will be great.

MEG

Coffee, tea, and snacks would be a nice touch. Enter Baldwin. It beats me why he's suddenly messing around in such a trivial item.

CARTER

Does make you wonder.

MEG

But there he is. Telling us we *must* stick with our internal supplier. *Policy*. Explain this. Internal is *five times* the cost of what we can get from any one of a dozen outside vendors. (Baldwin *shouts from above*: It's the policy! Meg *shakes her head*.) He uses that word like a weapon.

CARTER

Keep at them, Meg. You can do it.

MEG

They take the joy out of life.

CARTER

Keep at them.

MEG

You already said that.

CARTER

Don't let them wear you down. You've got to play as hard as they're playing.

MEG

Couldn't you...?

CARTER

I *could*, and it would be *easy* for me to step in for you, and you would like me more if I did, but help is not always helpful. You know that. (Meg *shakes her head in frustration*.) Listen to me, Meg. (*angry*) There's no reason for you to be treated like dirt. This coffee business is *not* a trivial item. He wants you to think so, but it's not. It's just one more effort to drive you back into your place. Don't let that happen. He's got to get used to dealing with you equal to equal.

MEG

So you're not going to talk to him.

CARTER

I'm not going to talk to him.

MEG

And you expect me to handle it?

CARTER

I *know* you can handle it.

MEG

Great. (*pause*) I'll handle it.

CARTER

So what are you going to do?

MEG

I said I'd handle it.

CARTER

Meg?

MEG

(*angry*) I'll handle it. (*a few karate chops, she exits.*)

CARTER

You will keep me informed?

Act I, scene 7

(Bill and Jason huddle outside Bronton's office. Bronton is busy with a stack of papers. Jason nudges Bill to knock; Bill hesitates, then knocks. Bronton is disturbed to see them but reluctantly gestures them to enter. Jason pushes a hesitant Bill in first.)

BILL

Uh, sorry to disturb you, ma'am.

BRONTON

If it's about that sign...

(Jason nudges Bill to continue and enjoys the following interaction.)

BILL

Uh, no, ma'am. We understand. We don't want a sign.

BRONTON

Signs are only for departments...

BILL

Understood, ma'am, uh, we don't *want* a sign.

BRONTON

If we start making exceptions for every...

BILL

Please, ma'am, we're not talking about signs.

BRONTON

Precisely why there are policies, something you folks don't seem to comprehend.

(The phone rings; Bronton picks up, into the phone)

No, no, this is a good time. Let me wrap this up. A second. *(to Bill and Jason)* What is it then? You can see I'm busy.

(Jason nudges Bill to continue; Bill resists, pushes Jason forward.)

JASON

Letters, ma'am. That's all we need, a handful of letters.

BRONTON

Letters?

JASON

Yes, ma'am. No sign. Just letters. Nine letters. You do have letters?

BRONTON

(flustered, into the phone) Maybe I should call you back. *(listens)* No, no, all right, hang on, this won't take but a minute. *(to Jason)* Letters.

BILL

(apologetic) That's all, ma'am. Just a handful of letters.

JASON

(showing Bronton a list of letters) Yes, ma'am. three Es, two Rs, one N, one G, one I, and one S. That would do it for us. *(beat)* And we won't bother you again.

(Bronton is stuck, looking back and forth between the list and the phone.)

There is no policy about letters, is there, ma'am?

BRONTON

Letters. *(looking at the phone, the list, her stack of papers. She grabs the list.)* All right, all right. You'll get your letters. Just leave please.

(Bill and Jason exit. Bronton returns to the phone, but it appears her party has hung up. She slams down the phone in frustration. Bill and Jason stand outside; Bill is hyperventilating.)

Interlude following scene 7

(Meg has come upstairs; she meets Baldwin who has just left Fine's office. Meg goes nose to nose with Baldwin.)

MEG

(forceful, hands on hips) Now, about the caterers! *(Baldwin recoils.)*

*

(Fine and Bronton outside Fine's office)

FINE

(helpless) The results are there. What am I supposed to do?

BRONTON

(calm, as if talking to a child) Harold, you've said it yourself: There's more to this business than results. Limits, Harold; you need to set limits. Things are spinning out of control. What's next? Are they going to be taking over accounts? Is that the next step in this...empowerment insanity?

(painful pause)

FINE

(hesitant) Actually...

BRONTON

What? *(beat)*

FINE

It's just...

BRONTON

What?

FINE

(barely audible) Delaney.

BRONTON

(screams) Delaney! Have you lost your mind? *(Gets under control.)* Sorry, Harold. It's just that...*Delaney...*Of all people. What could you be *thinking?*

FINE

Carter assured me...

(Bronton begins to walk off shaking her head in disbelief, muttering "Carter.")

FINE

(Calls out, pleading) What do you want from me?

BRONTON

(stopping and turning back) Leadership, Harold, leadership.

FINE

(baffled) Leadership? This is financial management, for God's sake. What has leadership got to do with anything?

(They walk off in opposite directions.)

Act I, Scene 8

(The team members are meeting upstairs in Carter's office; Meg is leading the meeting, Coach Rick enters.)

RICK

(Plops a report down on the desk.)

Your monthly report. Good news, bad news. Much improvement. *(Cheers from the team)* And complaints. *(Boos)* Too many complaints.

JASON

Ah, the world is full of whiners.

RICK

Who happen to have lots of money in this company.

JASON

So...rich whiners.

MEG

(who has been looking through the report)

Thanks, Rick, we'll handle it.

RICK

I know you will. *(He makes to leave, pauses)* Still, if there's anything you need...

JASON

(irony) Got it. 1-800-CALL RICK.

RICK

Hey, you just never know. *Something* may come along that even *your* brilliant team can't handle.

MEG

(a touch of arrogance) Who could imagine such a thing?

(Rick leaves shrugging his shoulders.)

MEG

(perusing the report, to herself, reading, nodding) Good, good, good. *(Comes to the complaints)* Whoa! Get this. *(change of voice as she reads the complaints)* "I leave messages, no one calls back...I call one department, they tell me to call another, *they* tell me to call someone else; whoever I call is never the right one. STOP THANKING ME FOR MY PATIENCE! I AM NOT PATIENT!" Hmm, we've got a pocket of anger here, folks. *(looking around)* Who's on top of this?

(No response. Jason pokes Cathy who has been having trouble staying awake.)

(impatient) Let's have it, Cathy. What have you got?

CATHY

(weary) A bad headache is what I got. A dressing down from Delaney. *Oh, how I hate that man!* Then a team meeting till 8:00, working till 2:00 this morning putting the finishing touches on *this*. *(Tosses a loose leaf folder on the table, and then plops her head back down. The others gather around and glance through the report.)*

BILL

This is great, Cathy.

MEG

Brilliant.

JASON

(Churchillian) By gorry, this could be the end of customer complaints...in our time.

MEG

We are talking about *customer service!*

(Meg, Bill, and Jason enthusiastically begin to sing "We're customer service, the heart of the business," but get no further than that when they notice that Cathy is crying; they gather around her. Bronton, passing through, stops and listens in to the following.)

CATHY

(head down, mumbling)

I'm quitting.

BILL

What?

CATHY

I'm quitting! *(The others are stunned.)* It's too much...can't cut it. *(She picks up her report, gazes mournfully at it, and sings "Empowerment Stings.")*

Empowerment stings,
It demands everything a person can give;
Wakes you in the morning,

Troubles you at night,
You fret and you worry:
Am I doing things right?

(plaintive)

Whatever happened to nine to five days?
You do your damn job, and then shove it away.
The days were the company's
The nights were your own.
Never expected to bring trouble home.

The along came John Carter
With his smiling face;
Saw how our lives here
Were a sad disgrace.

Commitments were made,
So we put to the test everything that we were;
Training and teamwork would take care of the rest,
But you burn yourself out at the company's behest.

No more,
No more.
I'm out the door;
No abysses to leap to or gauntlets to run through;
It's peace that I'm looking for.

I missed class last night...This damn report. *(strong)* Class means a lot to me. I'm not going to be in this job forever. Can't study. Can't sleep. When I do, I have these horrible dreams about Delaney: I can't find his data; he's screaming at me...Too much tension...I have no life. Everything is for the team. My boyfriend is tired of hearing about team, team, team...*(angry)* I'm tired of hearing about the team.

(sings)

Oh how I yearn for those nine to five days,
To do my dumb job that won't get in my way.
The days can be the company's,
The nights will be mine
Such a wonderful job will suit me just fine;
It will suit me just fine.

That's it. I love you all; but I'm outta here. End of the week.

BILL

I don't want you to go, Cathy.

MEG

We'll cover for you. Figure out something about Delaney. Give you a chance to breathe. *(Cathy shakes her head.)* No way we can help?

CATHY

Uh uh.

JASON

Maybe you could get one of those manager positions. They don't seem to work too hard. *(Meg gives him a poke, humbled.)* Just trying to help.

CATHY

(Gives Jason a peck on the cheek.)

(lightening) My decision's made. Don't feel bad for me. The worst part was telling you. I'm OK now.

BILL

Maybe this empowerment stuff doesn't work for everybody.

JASON

It's certainly not working for Bronton.

(Bronton bristles, then storms off to her office.)

CATHY

Hey, don't take this personally. I'm proud of everything we've done. I just need to move on.

(Cathy exits. Bill, Jason, and Meg look at one another, not knowing what to say or do.)

BILL

I'm gonna miss Cathy.

MEG

(nods) Like a death in the family.

JASON

I still say she should take one of those manager jobs. You know, where no one *expects* you to know anything.

MEG

(eye roll) OK. Back to business. *(checking off her agenda items.)* Where are we on the new policies? How's the training room shaping up? Do we need to take another look at our coverage plan? Let's move it, gang!

Act I, Scene 9

(Carter, going to his upstairs office, bumps into Bronton who is coming from Fine's office.)

BRONTON

(big smile, like the best of friends) Good morning, John.

CARTER

(big smile) Good morning, Maggie.

(They pass. Bronton excitedly signals Jackson to join her in her office. Carter passes by in the middle of this conversation and eavesdrops.)

BRONTON

(enthusiasm) Red Sox fan, am I right?

JACKSON

(puzzled) In bad times and in worse.

BRONTON

(tight smile) Good one. Never been much of a fan myself...So why should I be the one to have...*(hiding something behind her back)* something that has little value for me, but may hold some interest for you. *(Brings forward)* What do you think? Two box seats for Friday night's game. Third row, behind home plate. Are those good seats?

JACKSON

Are you're kidding?

BRONTON

Are you interested?

JACKSON

For me?

BRONTON

For you...and your son. Gulliksen gave them to me. A grateful customer. Right off I thought: Jackson. These are for Jackson, our long suffering Sox fan.

JACKSON

That's very thoughtful of you, ma'am. My son...if you think *I'm* a fan; he'll be delirious. Thank you so much.

BRONTON

(brushing it off) Richard, I've had my eye on you for some time. I admire how you carry yourself. There's an air about you. Calm. Respectful. Humble. Buttoned-down...I mean in a good sense. Something very old-fashioned. *(beat)* I'm going to need you, Richard; the organization is going to need you.

JACKSON

I don't understand.

BRONTON

Chaos is creeping in. Don't let your feelings blind you to what's happening. You see

what *he's* doing. This team stuff. Empowerment. Who *knows* what else that man has in mind for us?

JACKSON

(now fumbling with those tickets in his pocket) I really don't...

BRANTON

(becoming heated) There are ways to do things. Right ways, wrong ways. If he wants something for his people, *he* should come to me. That's the way it ought to be. Why do we bother with an organization chart if any two-month entry person can come barging into my office feeling like I ought to jump at his command?

JACKSON

It *is* a change.

BRANTON

It's more than a change, Richard; it's a calculated effort to subvert this organization. Fifty years of tradition. You don't just throw that away!

JACKSON

It does seem weird when one of *them* instructs *me* on the new routine for servicing customers.

BRANTON

Of course it does. So what do you do?

JACKSON

What can I do? Their stuff's good.

BRANTON

(dismissing what Jackson said) And then *I'm* made to be the wicked witch. Because I don't jump up and clap my hands. *Oh, isn't it just wonderful the new tricks these young folks can do.* As if history doesn't matter, tradition, order. Respect. *(beat)* I know what they think of me, how they make fun of me. I've heard it. *(beat)* Am I so wrong to resent and resist? Doesn't *someone* have to?

JACKSON

(very uncomfortable, hesitant) I haven't given it much...

(Carter passes by; notices the meeting; stands outside, eavesdropping, enjoying the byplay)

BRANTON

You've seen his office?

JACKSON

Uh huh.

BRANTON

It's all there. Look at that office and you're seeing your future, unless...

JACKSON

(frightened) What?

BRONTON

Unless we do something. *(beat)* Remember when you were a manager? You dreamed, some day, with hard work, a few breaks, you'd get to be an officer. And wasn't part of the dream having an officer's office?

JACKSON

I remember.

BRONTON

Of course you do. It was no different for me. *(beat, angry)* Richard, I have had to put up with a lot of crap to get that office. Smiling when I felt like kicking ass. Being passed over by incompetent men. Clumsy groping in elevators and hallways. Kissing up to pompous fools. Office was the light at the end of the tunnel, the payoff for all the pain. *(pause)* Office. That was it. The prize. So now what do we have? Carter. Carter's an officer, but he doesn't care about a fancy office. He's above it. He's democratic. He's one of the people. He lives with the people in that cubbyhole. Twenty-five years with the company. An officer. And he's living in that cubbyhole. And what's with his office? *(pointing to Carter's officer's office)* It's the Bolshevik revolution. Workers of the world, unite. You have nothing to lose but your manners. *(pause, sad)* So much for the prize. *(beat)* And, Richard, it pains me to see *you've* made some changes in *your* office.

JACKSON

(hesitant, fearful) Nothing much...little stuff...simplifying.

BRONTON

Carter?

JACKSON

No...well, yes...but...I don't really need all that...

BRONTON

Watch your step, Richard.

JACKSON

What harm?...If it would help...

BRONTON

It will help nothing. It will only destroy. *(beat, as if explaining to a child)* Organizations need order, Richard. Predictability. Clear paths. Clear lines of authority. Traditions. But Carter, he's ready to toss all that away for some cockeyed notions of democracy.

JACKSON

I'm sorry you're taking this so hard.

BRANTON

(angry) Me! And *you?* What are you? Just a fan, up in the stands? This is not one of your baseball games. Like it or not, you're *in* this game. Time is coming...soon... when you're going to have to choose sides. Our way or Carter's way? *(She begins to leave.)* Think about it, Richard. Choose carefully. *(as she leaves, friendly)* And enjoy the tickets!

(Jackson takes out the tickets, looks at them, then quickly stuffs them back in his pocket as if they are something dirty to be hidden from the eyes of others. Branton bumps into Carter who is not hiding the fact that he has been right outside the door. There's a tense moment.)

CARTER

(smile) And then there's the matter of money.

BRANTON

(angry, trying to move past) Excuse me?

CARTER

The big stuff, like bonuses, like fairness in compensation, like tying pay to results. Just some more of those cockeyed notions of democracy.

(Branton storms off.)

Act I, Scene 10

(The "Teams for Total Quality" conference. Carter dons a jacket with a name badge. He is concluding his speech, clearly enjoying himself as he takes questions from an offstage audience.)

CARTER

(pointing out to the audience, taking questions)

Yes, please.

QUESTION

You went from 52 managers to *two!* That must have had an incredible impact.

CARTER

(smiling) Better than I could have imagined. A *huge* uptick in worker energy, morale, and productivity. *(beat)* Listen, plantations need managers. We didn't. *(pointing to the speaker)* Do *you?* *(pause)* I didn't think so.

QUESTION

Still, what *did* happen to those 50 managers?

CARTER

We rehabilitated them.

QUESTION

Excuse me?

CARTER

Rehabilitated. Made them coaches. Told them their job was to work themselves *out* of a job.

QUESTION

Did it work?

(Bronton gradually appears out of the shadows, barely visible behind Carter.)

CARTER

For some. Some just could not stop *managing*. So we gave *them* a choice: join the teams as members...or leave. *(pause)* Some joined; some left. *(Shrugs. What more can you do?)*

QUESTION

Doesn't empowerment frighten some execs? Concerned that things will get out of control.

(Bronton in agreement)

CARTER

They're right. Things *will* get out of control, *Their* control. The question is: Is that a problem? I don't think so.

QUESTION

Wouldn't *they* say it *is* a problem?

CARTER

They are not my first priority. There's a point at which you just have to move on.

QUESTION

Still, there *is* the rest of the organization. How is *your* work impacting *it*?

CARTER

(confident smile while miming turbulence) Shaking it loose. *(beat)* And they ain't seen nothin' yet. Stay tuned. *(Starts to close off.)*

MODERATOR

(closing it down) Thank you, John. A most thought-provoking talk.

(applause, interrupted by Carter)

CARTER

I forgot. I have gifts. *(He pulls up a bag of pin-on buttons that read DON'T MANAGE ME! He holds one up; reads it.)* Don't manage me!! *(There is laughter from the audience; he asks)* Who wants one?

(There is enthusiastic applause as he tosses them out to his "audience." He goes into slow motion as the applause fades, the light fades on him and comes up on Bronton slowly coming to the center stage and singing "Remember Me" as Carter, still in slow motion, continues to smile and wave.)

BRONTON

(sings)

Remember me, respect me;
I'm a player too.
Mock me or block me,
You'll see what I can do.

Don't tempt the fates, John Carter;
Don't fly too close to the sun;
Learn to deal with us mere mortals
Or your flight soon will be done

Remember me, respect me;
Or your days are through.
Boss me or cross me;

You'll see what I can do.

You are their shining angel of change,
Empowering wherever you go;
But just remember this, John Carter:
There is power in the status quo.

An awesome power in the status quo.
An awesome power in the status quo.

Curtain

ACT II

Act II, Scene 1

(Downstage. Meg paces back and forth, frantic)

MEG

(pointing up) There's trouble. Serious trouble.

* * * *

(The lights comes up upstage. CARTER and FINE in FINE's office)

FINE

(furious, shaking memos in CARTER'S face) What the hell is going on?...Sit down!
(CARTER sits while FINE stands over him.) Do you know what these are? *(no response)*
Customer complaints, John. Customer complaints. *(He riffles through the papers, finds what he is looking for.)* Here. Five single-spaced pages. Pure rage.

CARTER

Who?

FINE

You don't know, do you? You've never seen this report, have you?

CARTER

Please, don't play games with me. Who?

FINE

Delaney.

CARTER

(mumbles) Oh shit. Cathy...

FINE

Delaney is furious.

CARTER

Delaney is tough.

FINE

He has every right to be tough. He's got a huge amount of money tied up in us.

CARTER

This is my fault...

FINE

Damn right it's your fault.

CARTER

Cathy...It slipped through the cracks.

FINE

(cutting him off; heavy sarcasm)

Why don't you drop Delaney a cute little note. Tell him how his portfolio *slipped through the cracks*. And send along a nice box of chocolates.

CARTER

The team...

FINE

(cuts him off) Don't give me that team crap. I warned you. I told you that Delaney was too big an account to play with. I want that in the record, you hear me?

CARTER

It will be in the record.

FINE

You, not any team, are responsible for the Delaney account.

CARTER

It will be handled.

FINE

(riffing through the documents) Do you know who got these complaints, John? The Chairman, John. The Chairman got these complaints. And you know how the Chairman feels about complaints, John?

CARTER

I know how the Chairman feels about complaints.

FINE

No, I'm afraid you don't know anything. Can you imagine how high the Chairman bounced when he heard from Delaney?

CARTER

We'll clean this up.

FINE

The Chairman asked me: "What's going on, Fine? Are things out of control, Fine?" And, you know what? I had nothing to say. And do you know why I had nothing to say? *(beat)* Because I don't *know* anything. Because everything's a secret in that...that little cult of yours. *(beat)* And even *you* don't know what's going on.

CARTER

We *will* clean this up.

FINE

(anger) John, don't give me your optimistic bullshit! *(beat)* Your organization is out of control. *(like an oath)* Empowerment! Everyone's in control, no one's in control. *(beat)* And where were you? Out of town. Giving speeches. About what a great operation *you've* created.

CARTER

We will clean this up.

FINE

(as if CARTER never spoke) I'm putting together a task force. Let's get to the bottom of these problems. You're the Chairman.

CARTER

I'll pick two or three frontline people.

FINE

No you won't. This is not one of your empowerment exercises. This is a *management* problem, and *management* will deal with it.

CARTER

But they're closest to the situation, they...

FINE

(interrupts) Let me be clear, John. *No workers!*

CARTER

But, if this is imposed on them...don't you see...

FINE

This is *your* problem, not theirs. I want you to get in there...now! Roll up your sleeves and get control of this.

(CARTER shrugs, makes to leave. FINE stops him at the door.)

And John...I want you to understand something. *(beat)* This is a career-threatening situation.

(CARTER makes his way to his cubicle office.)

Act II, Scene 2

(Meg, Bill, and Jason are in the cubicles in phone/computer action. We can overhear snippets of overlapping conversations: "Yes, we're looking into it." "I'll get back to you within the hour." "I do apologize for that." "Yes, I know we promised that; we're just a bit behind." "If you'll give me a few minutes." "I don't have that information, but I can get it for you." CARTER enters his cubicle, stands deep in thought, looks up at the executive offices and sings "This is my Mission.")

(plaintive)

Why can't they see me?
What makes them so blind?
What is this danger
They're always hiding behind?

Is this a bad world
That we're creating here?
Is growth so terrible
Some demon to fear?

(excited) Yes, yes, yes. That's exactly it. To them I am this terrible demon. And they won't be happy until they destroy me. Well, that is not going to happen.

(angry and strong)

I'll show them,
YES I WILL!
I'll make this work,
YES I WILL!
They cannot stop me,
I've come too far.
If it's war they want
I'll give them war.

MEG, BILL, and JASON

We're with you, Mr. Carter!

CARTER

It's futile to change a single piece; they'll just eat me alive. *(beat)* It's all or nothing!

This is my mission,
It drives my ambition,
A fate I just cannot escape,
To take what is barren,
Empty and scorned,
And transform it into something so great.

MEG, BILL, JASON, AND CARTER

Oh we'll show them,
YES WE WILL!
We'll make this work,
YES WE WILL!
They cannot stop us,
We've come too far.
If it's war they want
We'll give them war.

CARTER

Tell me, my partners. Who makes this company great?

WORKERS

(shout) WE DO!

CARTER

Are there any problems teamwork cannot solve?

WORKERS

NONE!

CARTER

Then let's take care of business. *(big CARTER smile, beat, strong)* I'm patient, and I'm optimistic.

(Lights fade on the others and immediately come up on FINE alone)

FINE

(from his office)

And I'm neither

Lights

Act II, scene 3

(The upper stage is set as a conference room. Present are FINE, CARTER, BRANTON, and Baldwin; Meg is seated off to the side taking notes. There are several pairs of conversations going on simultaneously, none of which involve CARTER.)

CARTER

(holding up his hands trying to bring the meeting to order) If we could start by identifying the problems, then we could look into them.

FINE

(angry) This is not about looking into problems, Carter; this is about fixing them and fixing them *now*. This is not brain surgery. We are talking about customer service, for God's sake. *(to Baldwin)* Tell him what's going on with the Worthington account.

BALDWIN

The Worthington account is a mess!

CARTER

Help me understand what's going on here. A team checked the Worthington account.

BALDWIN

(dismissive) A team.

CARTER

They found *one* complaint. You hear me, *one!* And that one has been taken care of.

BALDWIN

(to FINE) He's out of touch.

CARTER

Am I?

BALDWIN

Delaney. What about Delaney?

CARTER

How long are we going to harp on Delaney? One slip up...They learned from it.

FINE

This is not a university.

BRANTON

A rather sizeable slip-up, wouldn't you agree, John?

CARTER

What? And this was the first *sizeable* slip-up in this organization?

FINE

You sold me on Cathy. You assured me she could handle Delaney as well as any of us.

BALDWIN

Empowerment makes it so.

CARTER

I will personally talk to Delaney. This can be straightened out.

BALDWIN

(to CARTER) I came by your office (*looking to BRANTON and smirking*) but it seemed to be occupied.

BRANTON

By the communists?

BALDWIN

With their feet up on the desk.

BRANTON

The mahogany desk? My word.

CARTER

Is this the subject now? My desk?

BRANTON

It's all the same. It's a question of leadership.

CARTER

I thought it was about customer service.

FINE

It is. Customer service and customer complaints.

BALDWIN

In this organization, they seem to be going hand in hand.

FINE

The chairman has gotten complaints. The chairman *loves* complaints.

CARTER

(to FINE) And you take every piece of crap the chairman throws your way, and just pass it on to me.

FINE

(cannot fathom any possible alternative) What else would I do with it?

CARTER

(calmly) What else? I'll tell you what else. You could push back on him. Gently. You could shield us. You could assure him that we are good people always doing the best we can. Always looking out for the good of the company. You could let him know that he is not alone, that *all of us* are upset by these complaints, and that *all of us* are working to eliminate them. You could let him know that we are more inspired by support from above, by displays of confidence, than we are by these angry eruptions. And, if that doesn't work, you could tell the chairman to GET OFF OUR BACK! WE'RE DOING THE BEST WE CAN! *(back to calm)* That's *what else* you could do.

FINE

(dismissive) You just don't know the chairman.

(CARTER shrugs, helpless)

BALDWIN

(to CARTER) The customers are coming back at me. They're not feeling like *(snide) delighted customers*.

CARTER

Was this entirely my doing?

BALDWIN

You're the one who made the big promises. And they're still waiting.

CARTER

Were we not all in this room when you *(pointing to FINE)* said "Hold off on the new computer system; it'll improve the profit picture." *(pointing to Baldwin)* And didn't you think that was a *terrific* idea, just the right move to sweeten your bonus? *(pointing to BRONTON)* And I didn't hear you disagree, did I? *(BRONTON looks away.)* I didn't think so.

BRONTON

(to FINE) Are we here to listen to his excuses? This is a question of leadership, and he is clearly not on top of the situation.

CARTER

Just how big *is* this problem? I'm having trouble grasping what this is all about.

FINE

Well maybe that's your problem. Your sunshine personality just can't grasp the severity of this situation.

CARTER

Uh uh. I grasp the severity. It just has nothing to do with what we're talking about, does it? (*pained silence, to Jackson*) What about you? (*no response*) Nothing to say? (*no response*)

(*Jackson appears to be about to speak; he looks to BRANTON who glares at him, then back to CARTER. He shrugs, shakes his head, looks down at the table.*)

CARTER

Look, there are some problems here; I accept that. But understand: We are turning around a department that for years has been a total disaster. I have brought figures. (*He starts to distribute copies of his documents.*)

FINE

(*looking at his watch*)

I've another meeting. All I can say, John, is this: get on top of this. We'll meet again next week.

CARTER

I can't be here.

FINE

Another speech? (*CARTER nods. Annoyed*) Instead of *teaching* people about leadership, you ought to be here *practicing* it.

(*The others laugh, appreciating the joke.*)

CARTER

It's too late to cancel. It wouldn't look good...for the company. I'll have Rick sit in for me.

BALDWIN

(*sarcasm*) Ah Rick, that rare species. A manager who has somehow survived the plague that has swept away so many others. Years of devoted service. But none of that mattered.

BRANTON

Who needs good men when you've got...(*spits out*) *empowerment!*

FINE

(*to CARTER*) You should be here, not Rick.

CARTER

Rick's on top of all the issues.

FINE

(*Shrugs and nods. If it has to be, it has to be. He dismisses all with a flick of the wrist.*) So be it.

Lights

* * * *

Interval

(CARTER and Baldwin leave the meeting moving off in different directions. CARTER stops, turns, calls out to Baldwin.)

CARTER

Ralph.

(Baldwin stops and turns; the two men stare at each other.)

I don't get it. This makes no sense. The bitterness. The hate.

(Baldwin waves it off, turns to leave.)

(screams) Why do you hate me?

(Baldwin continues, then stops, turns.)

BALDWIN

(calm) Think about it, Carter. You're the smart one. Think about it. Who hates who.

Act II, Scene 4

(Upstage there is a meeting of the executives with Rick sitting in for CARTER. The meeting is all in mime except for the final interchange. The interaction is heated with finger-pointing at RICK and at the worker area below, along with occasional desk-pounding by BALDWIN. RICK appears calm up to the final interchange. Downstage is a worker meeting with Meg, Bill, and Jason. Our focus is on the downstage meeting, but occasionally we hear banging from above.)

JASON

(studying a report) What am I missing here. What I get from the agents is this: They're disappointed. The computer system's not up yet. Disappointed, that *it*. Where's the fury? *(pointing upstairs)* They're talking about all the fury out there. I'm not seeing it.

BILL

(pointing to his copy) These statements from Baldwin are pure bullsh...ah, baloney.

MEG

(checking her computer)

Data look good. Check this out. Six month summary. Turnaround time for re-instating old customers: *half* of what it was a year ago.

BILL

Amazing!

MEG

So check that off their list.

BILL

We've got to give them the *real* picture.

JASON

I wonder.

BILL

What are you talking about?

JASON

Maybe we're the ones not getting the *real* picture.

MEG

We've got data.

JASON

You're not getting it. Maybe they're not interested in our data. These folks may be hard asses, but they're not stupid. Consider the possibility that they have all the data they need.

(painful pause)

MEG

(depressed) So maybe it's not about data.

JASON

Get Carter! That's what this is about.
That's what it's always been about.
Get Carter; get us.

BILL

(shaken) Us? We could lose our jobs.

JASON

Maybe.

BILL

(panicked) Maybe? What do you mean
maybe? Didn't I warn you? Didn't I tell
you we were pushing too hard. You
said: Don't worry, Bill. Don't worry.
Carter will take care of us. Now, who's
going to take care of us? *Oh my God!*
Now what do we do?

MEG

We just can't sit on our butts and
whine. Carter's rule number one: No
whining.

BILL

Maybe we should apologize.

JASON

Over my dead body.

MEG

Let's finish up the report. Give them
the hard data. Let them baloney all
they want. Let them know that at least
we know the truth.

JASON

We have to be strategic about how we
present this. Carter's rule number
two: Make it easy for them to hear it.

RICK

(super politely to FINE) Sir, might I be
allowed an exit speech?

FINE

An exit speech?

RICK

Yes sir, for I must be going.

*(They work on strategy in mime; during
which we hear the end of the executive
meeting.)*

BRONTON

(angry) We're not finished.

RICK

I am finished...in any number of ways. Except, that is, for my exit speech. *(to FINE)* May I?

(FINE nods helplessly and gets a glaring reaction from BRONTON.)

Let me start with a summary of the meeting to this point. In a nutshell, it has been a huge, fetid pile of horsecrap.

BRONTON

Harold, why are we listening to this?

RICK

Buried deep under the pile, too distasteful to approach, lies a simple truth.

BALDWIN

(to FINE) This is an executive meeting. He doesn't belong here.

RICK

(to BALDWIN) Sir, if this were a *real* executive meeting *you* wouldn't belong here.

FINE

The simple truth?

RICK

Fear. Carter strikes panic in your hearts. He cannot be allowed to succeed. You couldn't survive for a day in his kind of world. And you know it. *(beat)* Simply put, you don't have the requisite skills.

BRONTON

(slamming the table, shouting, reaching out to slap RICK) I don't have the requisite

skills! Who the fuck do you think you are to say that?

RICK

Whoa! Is this Miss Manners speaking?

BRONTON

(screaming) Snot-faced punks! Every damn one of them! This is *precisely* what I am talking about. No damn respect!

(This catches the workers' attention; they hear the rest of the interchange.)

(then, having heard BRONTON's outburst, he recites as if from a manual)

And remember. Carter's rule number *three*: Make it simple; make it brief; no blaming; no complaining. **And above all: Be respectful.**

* * * *

Act II, Scene 6

(Upstage, FINE is in his office trying to work, but he is interrupted by a constant flow from BRANTON and BALDWIN. We cannot hear their conversations but it is clear that they are upset and that FINE is unable to work with the constant interruptions.)

(Downstage, the workers are working. CARTER is in his cubicle with Meg going over her report. Jackson approaches; it is clear he wants to talk privately with CARTER. Meg leaves; Jackson enters.)

CARTER

(Upbeat, the CARTER smile) Richard! Good to see you! What brings you to the belly of customer service?

JACKSON

(depressed) John.

CARTER

Man, you look like you're going to a funeral. *(Pauses; gets the sense that this is precisely where JACKSON thinks he is going.)* Ha! Do not sweat it, my friend. There'll be no funeral. Come here. *(full of pride, shows him Meg's report)* Just take a look at this. I am so proud of these people. How they've responded to this *crisis*.

JACKSON

They are good.

CARTER

They are very good. You think there's any way Branton and his kind can crush this energy of the future?

JACKSON

I've been impressed. Jealous. It makes me wonder about myself. What kind of a leader am I?

CARTER

You're good.

JACKSON

(Shakes it off.) So I get promoted. A big bonus every year. I get to thinking I'm really something special. All that money. I must be good. Then I see what you do. Sometimes I go home, talk to my wife. I tell her what incredible things you're doing. Like a revolution. Shaking us out of a hundred years of old thinking. I tell her: Carter is great. I tell her: I wish I could do half the things Carter can do. I tell her I wish my people felt toward me the way Carter's feel toward him. I tell her

(hushed) I tell her Carter ought to be the General Manager.

CARTER

Dangerous talk, Richard.

JACKSON

So big deal. I tell my *wife*. That's not who I ought to be talking to.

(sings)

Where is my courage?
Where is my heart?
Why do I let fear tear me apart?

Why don't I stand up,
Tell them what's right.
What would I lose if I took on this fight?

I'm here with you,
But I'm not there with you;
I wish it were different, my friend.
I am not up to it,
When courage calls, I quit.
Don't count on me in the end.

CARTER

Don't sweat it, Richard. It's going to be OK.

JACKSON

These guys are animals. I couldn't take it the way you do. I'm a...a salesman.

CARTER

And you're damn good.

JACKSON

(dismissive) Salesman. It's all about being nice. Smiles. Golf. Jokes. That I can do.
But, when it gets hot...You see it...I freeze.

Why don't I speak up?
Where is my stand?
I long for the gesture, heroically grand.

I'm filled with anger
That's wrapped up in fright
Churning inside me
Knowing you're right

CARTER

Hey, they also serve who...

JACKSON

(dismissive) Sure, sure.

I'm on the sidelines cheering you on
Hoping that you'll win this game.
I see you out there, fighting alone,
And watching you, my heart's filled with shame.

CARTER

(the CARTER smile) Richard, you are not letting me down.

JACKSON

(annoyed) Don't you see? This is not about you. Maybe you'll come out OK...maybe not. This is about me, dammit. Where the hell am I? *(beat)* You should have seen your manager...It scared me. All that emotion. *(beat)* Well, I just wanted to let you know.

(He begins to leave; hesitates.)

CARTER

Something else, Richard?

JACKSON

You know what I wish?

CARTER

Tell me.

JACKSON

I wish you could empower *me*.

CARTER

Excuse me.

JACKSON

Empower me!

CARTER

Richard, I can't just empower you...like magic. That's not how it works.

JACKSON

I want you to be proud of me. The way you're proud of Rick and Meg and the others.

CARTER

I *am* proud of you Richard. You're a good friend.

JACKSON

More like a loyal puppy. And not even so loyal.

(CARTER *smiles like JACKSON's image is not bad.*)

I want to be more than a puppy.

CARTER

What?

(Meg enters.)

JACKSON

I want to be an attack dog! grrr

MEG

And what would an attack dog do?

JACKSON

(*body hunched*) He'd tell Bronton, the next time she said anything about Carter, to...to...(weakly) buzz off.

MEG

Hmm, still sounds like a puppy dog. You need a more total body approach. (*She demonstrates a martial arts attack move.*) Try that.

(*In this sequence, JACKSON tries a few martial arts attacks. With MEG's coaching, he gradually improves until he effects a powerful set of aggressive moves.*)

CARTER

By George, he's got it!

MEG

Now here's the scene. I'm Bronton. Look at me. I've got you cornered. (*venomous*) Goddamn this Carter. Him and his damn teams. Him and his cockamamie ideas. No respect. Rude. Smart ass punks. Bossing us around. Trashing his office. Treating us like dumbbells. (*beat*) What do you say to that, Jackson?

(*a painful pause*)

JACKSON

(*a series of powerful attack moves, lunging, while shouting in full force*)

TAKE THAT, BRONTON! AND THAT! AND THAT! DIE, BRONTON, DIE?

(*Everyone is startled by JACKSON's intensity. BRONTON comes out of her office looking for the culprit. FINE, completely frustrated by the constant intrusions, rises and slams his door shut. A loud slam. All look up and freeze.*)

*

INTERVAL

(People are in their work places; everyone is doing solitary work; there are no conversations. Bill looks around, makes his way stealthily up the stairs to BRONTON's office. He knocks, enters. At first, BRONTON appears wary; they talk – we cannot hear what they say; in a few moments, BRONTON comes from around her desk, shakes Bill's hand and puts an arm around his shoulder. Bill leaves and stealthily makes his way back to his cubicle.)

Act II, Scene 7

(FINE is in his office reading a memo. He bangs his fist angrily on his desk. CARTER enters. He remains standing as FINE continues to read and fume.)

FINE

You've seen this memo.

CARTER

I've seen it.

FINE

This is your people's response to our last meeting.

CARTER

So it appears.

FINE

Was it your idea to give them the minutes of *our* meeting?

CARTER

(*enjoying this*) Actually, no. It was Meg's idea.

FINE

You think this is funny?

CARTER

Once again, I am having trouble understanding why you are so worked up.

FINE

That was an executive meeting.

CARTER

You knew Meg was there taking notes.

FINE

I assumed she was there for you, keeping *your* record. There were things said in that meeting that were meant to be kept among us. I told you that this was *management* business.

CARTER

I thought Meg used good judgment. If the workers are responsible for service, they ought to know what the bosses think of them.

FINE

Nonsense.

CARTER

Take a look at how they're responding to that list of complaints.

FINE

John, you and I are living in different worlds. To me this is more evidence of your poor judgment. If I wanted to talk to the workers, I would have done so. Your job is to shield them.

CARTER

That is not my job. My job is to bring them right into the middle of whatever problems this organization is having. I can't understand how you and others are not seeing the results that is producing.

FINE

(Rises, paces fitfully) The result I'm seeing is chaos. My executives are up in arms. That's all I'm dealing with these days: Carter, Carter, Carter. And Carter's damn people! And the complaints: from the chairman, from Delaney, from the agents, from the customers. From your...*colleagues*. Chaos. Can't you see what you've done.

(sings "Complexity")

John Carter comes along
Singing his damn new age song,
With his enlightenment schemes
And his empowerment teams.
Triumphs for you,
Headaches for me,
Anarchy reigns now,
And I'm to blame now.
Why all this complexity.

That's your gift to me...
This complexity?
Can't exchange it, or burn it, recycle, return it.
Take my advice:
Bring us something nice,
Like...
Simplicity

CARTER

(scornfully) Simplicity?

FINE

Yes! Simplicity.

CARTER

But people are complex. The world is complex. Complexity is what makes life rich,

fun, challenging. You wouldn't want to eat the same meal every day, would you?

FINE

As a matter of fact...

CARTER

Simplicity is a joke, an illusion. Nothing real is simple.

FINE

Is that right?

Mine was a simple dream,
A tidy money making machine,
People with cash to burn,
Make them a neat return,
Money for them,
Money for us,
Minimum action,
Simple transactions,
Everything done without fuss.

Oh, complexity,
How it vexes me, bringing nothing but strife,
It steals years from your life!
Tell ya what ya do:
Bring us something new,
Like simplicity.

CARTER

OK, let's talk simplicity!

It's pure lunacy,
All so boring and painless,
And utterly brainless!
Our minds go numb
And all hope succumbs
To simplicity!

FINE

John, you make things so difficult for yourself...and for all of us! It's driving me mad!

Pure and simple simplicity
Is the gift that would satisfy me.
Give me order and neatness and straightforward business,
We all simply thrive on simplicity!

FINE	CARTER
------	--------

<p>Simple simplicity Is the gift that would satisfy me, Give me order and neatness And straightforward business, We all simply thrive on Simplicity!</p> <p>Your damn complexity, Oh how it vexes me, Nothing but strife Years off of our life.</p> <p>Please, John, Get complexity Out of my life!</p>	<p>Your simplicity, It's pure fantasy, All so boring and painless And utterly brainless! Our minds go numb And all hope succumbs To simplicity!</p> <p>Simple simplicity Purest of fantasies! You can't get complexity Out of a complex life!</p>
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CARTER

Have you looked at that report?

FINE

(waving it off) John, you are missing the point.

CARTER

This complaint business has been overblown. You see that! There are problems, and we are working on them. This business is being handled. Friday I'll be addressing the entire service organization. Can we move on?

FINE

And yesterday's meeting. I'm sure you heard about it. It was a mistake for you not to have been here. Your manager...

CARTER

Rick.

FINE

He shouldn't have been here.

CARTER

He knows more about the customer situation than anyone.

FINE

Still, it was *your* responsibility to be here. *(subdued)* You know about his...outburst. The insults.

CARTER

His *outburst*? He was under attack, for God's sake.

FINE

Still, it was very inappropriate behavior.

CARTER

(sarcasm) Not managerial, is that it?

FINE

Exactly! It was...well, embarrassing.

CARTER

And all the things you were saying about me? The personal attacks, the attacks on him, the attacks on the teams. That's what you call...*managerial*.

FINE

What I'm saying is: *You* should have been here to take the attack. Not him.

(CARTER shakes his head in disbelief; he turns to leave, comes back to FINE; gets right in his face. They stand nose to nose. Then CARTER speaks.)

CARTER

And what I'm saying is this: *(slowly)* No one, no one should have had to take that attack. *(furious, pokes a stunned FINE in the chest.)* Do you understand what I am saying? No one. Can I make that any clearer to you?

(They stand nose to nose for a few moments CARTER, furious, turns to leave. He stops at the door, shakes his head. He returns. The two men stand at a distance, in silence looking at one another.)

How stupid I've been. *(beat)* Baldwin and Bronton, Baldwin and Bronton. If only I could get past Baldwin and Bronton. That's never been it. Has it? Bit players, that's all they've ever been. It's always been *your* game, Harold, hasn't it?

FINE

(an exasperated wave, taking in the whole organization.) I didn't want all this...mess!

CARTER

What? Fix Customer Service, but don't touch the rest of your...neat money making machine.

FINE

I didn't realize...

CARTER

This isn't about customer service, is it?

(no response from FINE)

It never has been, has it?
(no response)

All that stuff about complaints. All blown out of proportion. And you knew it.
(no response)

The Chairman, Delaney. That anger scares you. *They* know it. They love that about you. (beat) Still, you *knew* it could have been handled.
(no response)

And it wasn't about results. That was the biggest puzzle for me. I could take everything else, but I thought for sure, in the end, results would matter. But results didn't matter.
(no response)

It was the dream, wasn't it?

FINE

Your dream, John.

CARTER

I tried...

FINE

(interrupting, anger) You *never* tried. (beat) Bronton, Baldwin. To you they were just impediments to the grand scheme.

CARTER

(exasperated) It wasn't possible.

FINE

Too boring for you. (beat) And face it, John: *I'm* too boring for you.

CARTER

(Shakes his head.) No. You and I, we go back a long way. (beat) We were friends.

FINE

Were we?

CARTER

That first consulting gig we had? Fresh out of training. What a blast it was. We were a team, you and I? Can't we be that again?

FINE

We each have our own memories, John. (beat) Do you *really* remember that *blast*? Ajax Financial. Two hundred and fifty managers in the room. You and I are there. Young wizards, here to share our fresh-out-of-the-books wisdom.

CARTER

(enjoying the memory) We did fine.

FINE

Ajax has four presidents. One after the other, each steps to the podium, clutching his notes, and delivers the formula speech. Part humor. Part business. Part pep talk. *(beat)* One president, two presidents, three presidents, four. Then, it's my turn. I step to the podium, clutching *my* notes, sharing my wisdom. Solid. Practical. Probably boring. *(beat)* And then it's your turn. But where *is* John Carter?

CARTER

(getting a kick out of this.) It just came to me, a flash of inspiration.

FINE

Here comes John Carter. Not at the front of the room, but from the rear. Not on a raised platform, but at ground level. Not clutching notes, just opening himself to the crowd. 'Any questions?' he says. Remind me, John. I think you even made the point that the front of the room and the elevated podium reflected the...yes, I'm sure you said it...the *trappings of hierarchy*.

CARTER

(still enjoying the recollection, proud of it) It just came to me.

FINE

Once they got over the shock, the audience just loved it. The applause. First a ripple, then a wave. You were one of them. *(beat)* And it never occurred to you, not for a second, how those presidents might feel...or me. The five us, thanks to you, so publicly cloaked in the *trappings of hierarchy*.

CARTER

(starting to hit) I didn't realize...

FINE

You didn't then, you don't now. *(beat)* I made a mistake that day. I protected you. I told you that they were dropping *our* part of the program. But it wasn't our part; it was *your* part.

(pause)

CARTER

(subdued) You're ready to sink this, Harold, aren't you? To lose it all. For what?
(dismissive) For the likes of Bronton and Baldwin?

FINE

(angry) You still don't get it. *They* are *my* team, John. To you, they're boring or irrelevant; to me, they're what make this place plug along just fine. And you just don't see them. For once, John, just once, look to who is standing *beside* you.

CARTER

(facing away from FINE, hit with the full force of it, speaking to himself) What have I done?
(turns back to FINE) You can't sink this, Harold. The teams. They count on me. The

promises. I can't let them down. (*beat, enthusiasm*) Harold, there are so many possibilities here. The dream, the *big* dream...to make this a remarkable place for all of us. To show the *world* what organizations can be. I know how hard it is, for you, for the others, to give up the old ways. But to live the dream, Harold, we need to ask ourselves tough questions. *Why* do we cling to these class distinctions: the Superiors and the Inferiors? We put fancy words around it: Associates, Partners, Team One; but in our hearts we know it for what it is: Superiors and Inferiors. *Why* are we so generous with ourselves, Harold, rewarding ourselves lavishly whether we've earned it or not? All of us, Harold, we need to see through the lies. Only then can we connect from the heart. Think of it, Harold: An organization based on respect, generosity, equity. *Real* equity. Can you see it, Harold? That's where I want to take us. And I need you.

(CARTER *falls silent, painful pause*)

FINE

Tell me more about what you mean by *real* equity.

Lights

* * * *

Act II, Scene 8

(Downstage, Jason and MEG are busy putting together a presentation.)

JASON

(to MEG who is working on her computer)

How are the slides coming?

MEG

We're in good shape. I just need Bill's data.

JASON

Where the hell *is* Bill? He's been gone for hours.

(head shaking; no one has seen him)

MEG

A lot's riding on this presentation.

JASON

Maybe less than you think.

(BILL enters looking fresh.)

MEG

(impatient) Where have you been?

BILL

Taking a shower.

MEG

In the middle of the day?

BILL

I was dirty.

JASON

Dirty? *(Looks around.)* There's no way you can get dirty in this place.

BILL

There are ways.

JASON

What?

BILL

Just don't yell at me. *(beat)* I was talking to Bronton.

JASON

You're right; there *are* ways.

MEG

What were you doing talking to Brnton?

BILL

Apologizing.

JASON

Are you *crazy*? What the hell were you apologizing to *her* for?

BILL

I thought it would make things better. Maybe if I apologized they wouldn't be so mad at us.

JASON

(incredulous) Great! So you apologized. And?

BILL

She forgave me.

JASON

Big of her.

BILL

You two are always giving her a hard time. Making her mad. I thought...

JASON

You thought all you had to do was be nice, and she'd love us.

BILL

Now you're making *me* feel like a jerk.

JASON

It doesn't take much effort.

BILL

Maybe so. But *she* didn't yell at me. *(matter of fact)* She talked nice to me. Thanked me for coming in. Said she's had her eye on me for some time. Sees me as the gentlemanly type. Old-fashioned. Buttoned-down, she said. In a good way. She talked about bringing me in to have a nice chat with Mr. Fine. She said she thought my problem was the bad crowd I was hanging out with... particularly you and Meg. And about what a bad influence Mr. Carter is. Not respectful like me. And then she tells me she has a nice surprise for me. She reaches in her drawer and pulls out *(reveals with a flourish)* two Sox tickets!

JASON

You're kidding!

(pause)

BILL

(laughing) It was about then that I felt like I needed a shower.

MEG

But you took the tickets.

BILL

Remember what old mayor Honey Fitz said. "If they bribe you to vote for *them*, take the bribe m'boy...but vote for *me*." So, who's going with me to the game?

JASON

You are hopeless.

(from offstage we hear two voices humming the first two bars: "We're Customer Service, the heart of the business, the reason the customers stay.")

MEG

(excited) It's Cathy. She's back.

(CATHY enters with Young Man. Young Man goes straight to CATHY's old work station and begins to work on the computer. CATHY is carrying a Super-sized manual – The Comprehensive Customer Service Plan. She slams it down on MEG's desk.)

CATHY

(aggressive, like a karate chop) We are not going to let those suckers get away with it!

JASON

And good morning to you, too, Cathy.

CATHY

There it is. *The Comprehensive Customer Service Plan!* Let's see what they make of *that*.

JASON

How?

CATHY

Don't ask. One week, round the clock.

(MEG and BILL thumb through the manual.)

MEG

This is incredible. It's all here. *Everything* we've worked on. All the new procedures. The training programs. (*emotional*) This is our footprint, Cathy. What a gift. No matter what happens, this says "*We were there.*"

BILL

This is huge.

CATHY

(*light*) And it comes on a CD (*she shows it*) and on a thumb drive (*she shows it*) and with a power point presentation.

(*JASON nods questioningly toward Young Man who continues to work away.*)

Boy friend...you know, the one who's tired of team, team, team.

JASON

So?

CATHY

So he's on temporary team assignment. Loves the challenge.

JASON

And what brings about this change of heart?

CATHY

Restless nights. Thinking about what Carter said. "Step back and you'll always be afraid." Delaney was always going to be with me...unless I faced up to him. (*beat*) We're meeting tomorrow.

BILL

(*raising the Comprehensive Customer Service Plan high over his head, enthusiasm*) Management has got to love this plan!

JASON

Assuming they're in a loving mood.

BILL

How can they not love it? Tomorrow will be a great day for all of us. I just know it.

MEG

Carter makes a great speech.

CATHY

If anyone can do it, it's Carter.

JASON

(*ironically praying to heaven*) I believe. I believe. Carter will save us all.

(*JACKSON enters.*)

JACKSON

Carter won't be making any speech tomorrow...*(lets that sink in)* Carter won't be here tomorrow...Mr. Fine has asked Carter to resign as head of Customer Service.

BILL

Resign! I can't believe it.

JASON

I can. The assholes win again.

MEG

Is he gone?

JACKSON

Mr. Fine gave him a choice. *(beat)* Take a lesser position...

MEG

Like?

JACKSON

Back to Product Management.

MEG

(relief) Then he'd still be in the company.

JACKSON

(hesitant) There's more. *(pause)* He said Carter would...

MEG

(impatient) Would what?

JACKSON

He said Carter would have to be...*rehabilitated*.

BILL

What does that mean?

JACKSON

That's what Mr. Fine said.

JASON

(angry) Rehabilitated! What the hell does that mean? Go to some mental institution? Get a lobotomy? What *is* this rehabilitation bullshit?

JACKSON

I guess it means going back...back to the way it was...before.

MEG

Before? I remember before. Before was dull, meaningless, dumb.

JACKSON

I guess he wants Carter to be a manager...just like the rest of us.

JASON

Maybe he *does* mean lobotomy.

JACKSON

I guess it means no more of this empowerment stuff.

BILL

And the end of teams?

JACKSON

Not exactly. There'll be teams, but...

JASON

Come on, spill it. Tell us about the rehabilitated teams.

JACKSON

It's just that the teams will have managers.

JASON

Oh, that'll be a *nice* addition.

MEG

You said there was a choice.

(JACKSON mumbles something that can't be heard.)

MEG

(angry)

What's the choice?

JACKSON

(hesitant) Leave. The choice was for Carter to leave.

(We see CARTER gathering his things.)

CATHY

(Sings "Empowerment Stings, Part 2)

Empowerment stings,
It demands everything a person can give;
Wakes you in the morning,
Troubles you at night,
You fret and you worry:
Am I doing things right?

(MEG, BILL, and JASON join CATHY)

Remember those dreary nine to five days,
Our precious lives simply wasting away,
Trivial jobs trained pigeons could do,
Watching the clock as the long day dragged through.

(CATHY)

Then along came John Carter
With his smiling face,
Saw how our lives here were a sad disgrace.

Make the commitment
Put yourself to the test.

(CARTER, *as in flashback*)

Make the commitment,
Put yourselves to the test.

(CATHY, MEG, BILL, *and* JASON)

So we made that commitment,
Every damn day put ourselves to the test,
Let teamwork and training take care of the rest.
And we stretched and we grew
And became simply the best.

(JACKSON *joins in*)

No more,
No more,
He's out the door.

(CARTER begins his exit, saying goodbye to the workers. MEG, at a loss to do something, gives CARTER the Comprehensive Customer Service Plan. CARTER takes the plan, admires it, and passes it firmly on to JACKSON who accepts it with a bit of hesitation. The two lock eyes.

CARTER exits.)

(FINE walks through the worker space. His presence is a signal for the workers to rearrange their space back to how it was in the beginning. JASON signals them to stop and leave the work area as is.)

* * * *

(FINE moves to the podium to address the workers. At his side are BALDWIN and BRONTON. The workers are in their cubby holes. JACKSON is still in the work area, holding, reading the Comprehensive Customer Service Plan.)

FINE

My friends *(smile)* - Associates - these are challenging times for us. The competition is fierce. The demands are heavy. These are the times that test our mettle. *(rising in fervor)* We need to pull together. I need your help. I need your commitment. Your dedication. The organization needs you? *(shouting)* Can I count on you? Are you up to the challenge?

(BRANTON and BALDWIN applaud enthusiastically and look to the workers for response. None is coming. There is an uncomfortable silence. BILL rises, takes out his harmonica and begins to play, softly at first and with growing intensity as the scene unfolds. His is an upbeat number. JASON, MEG, and CATHY rise, join BILL and begin to dance, ever more energetically to the sound of BILL's harmonica. FINE is shaken but continues.)

We need to tighten our belts...

(The music comes up louder, and the dance is still more energetic.)

Trim our sails...

(and louder)

Keep our eye on the ball...

(and louder)

Focus our energies on the goal....

(JACKSON makes his way to FINE's offices. He slams the Comprehensive Customer Service Plan down on FINE's desk. All eyes turn to the sound. FINE hesitates, then continues. JACKSON leaves FINE's office, makes his way to CARTER's cubicle and plunks himself down in CARTER's old space. FINE continues.)

Firm up the organization. Good management. *(tough talk)* All groups will have good managers. I promise you that.

(music)

Cut out the fat...Eliminate the fluff...Get everyone working on service. *Everyone.*

(barely audible)

There'll be no more training teams.

No more Enterprise Team.

No more Challengers

No more Energizers

No more...

(There is nothing but BILL's music and the rhythmic dancing, JACKSON in CARTER's spot, as the curtain falls.)

CURTAIN