

Remain At Your Desk

Characters:

Clive: An office worker

Kathy: An office worker

Manager Dick: The office manager

Mail Boy: The mail boy

Kenny: An organic farm hippie

Chloe: An organic farm hippie

Setting:

The stage is divided into two halves. Stage right is a business office, stage left the kitchen of an organic farm hippie commune. At the beginning, the hippie side is in darkness; lights up on the business office side. CLIVE and KATHY are working at their desks. A few moments of silent work precede the dialogue.

CLIVE

So, Tuesday already.

KATHY

Yeah.

CLIVE

Tomorrow suddenly Wednesday and the week's half gone.

KATHY

Yep.

CLIVE

Then boom, Friday.

KATHY

Time flies.

CLIVE

Yeah.

Brief pause, more silent working. Clive gets up from his desk, restless. He looks out the window.

CLIVE

So how's the Pendleton project going?

KATHY

Finished it two weeks ago.

CLIVE

Really?

KATHY

Yep.

CLIVE

But today at the staff meeting, didn't you say...

KATHY

That it would take another three weeks, yes.

CLIVE

So, wait, you finished it already...

KATHY

Two weeks ago.

CLIVE

Right, but, I guess, you didn't, um, deliver it?

KATHY

No way.

CLIVE

Why not?

KATHY

Because they think I need another three weeks. Duh.

CLIVE

I see. So, what are you working on now?

KATHY

My novel.

CLIVE

Ahhh!

KATHY

Don't tell Manager Dick.

CLIVE

Me? Never! I'd never tell Manager Dick!

Enter MANAGER DICK from stage right carrying a thick stack of papers.

MANAGER DICK

So, how's the Pendleton project going?

KATHY

It's a real bear. I have to download more data and tweak the stats and crunch some numbers.

I'm waiting on the GMT figures and until then I'm going to PHP the XML and fire up the

Zortex on the QT. There's no way around it.

MANAGER DICK

You're a marvel, Kath, you really are. Clive, you should remain at your desk. I want to see you on seat. How's the Wembleton project going?

CLIVE

Well, I...

MANAGER DICK

Good. Finish it up and here's a new pile of papers for you to deal with. These are warranties for toaster ovens. I want them read and understood and filed according to wattage. That is all.

Exit Manager Dick, after dumping the papers on Clive's desk. Clive looks mournfully at the stack of papers and turns his gaze back to the window.

CLIVE

You know, I sometimes think those hippies have the right idea.

KATHY

The hippies squatting the organic farm right outside our towering office building?

CLIVE

Yeah.

KATHY

You mean because they have no rent, raise all their own food, don't have to work, and devote themselves every day to pleasurable pursuits like art and love?

CLIVE

Yeah.

Lights down on office, lights up on hippie kitchen. KENNY has no shirt on and no shoes and is strumming a guitar. CHLOE is also barefoot and is kneading some dough.

KENNY

I can take over kneading the dough for you if you want, Chloe. You made the bread last time.

CHLOE

Really? That'd be great. I'll play the guitar for a while.

KENNY

Cool. You know, the others are running around naked in the sheep field if you'd rather.

CHLOE

Awesome!

Chloe hastily exits stage left, pulling off her shirt as the lights go down. Lights up on the business office. Clive and Kathy are both at their desks, working silently. The MAIL BOY runs in breathlessly from stage right.

MAIL BOY

Oh my god! Oh my god! Oh my god! The Huns are coming! The Huns are coming!

CLIVE (*stands up, alarmed*)

What?

MAIL BOY

Oh my god! Oh my god! Oh my god! The Huns are coming! The Huns are coming!

CLIVE

Yeah, but, I mean, what? Huns?

KATHY

They're Central Asian equestrian nomad warriors from the fourth century.

CLIVE

Yes, but...

MAIL BOY

They're coming to attack the building! Oh my god oh my god oh my god!

The Mail Boy exits in a panic stage right. Manager Dick enters with a new huge stack of papers.

MANAGER DICK

Kathy, you're a marvel. Clive, down man, I want you on seat, pronto. Here. These are outdated non-binding legal contracts from twenty years ago. I want them pored over in minute detail and organized according to square footage.

Manager Dick slams the papers down on Clive's desk.

CLIVE

Sir, is it true the Huns are coming to attack us?

MANAGER DICK

There is no danger.

KATHY

But they are coming?

MANAGER DICK

Yes.

CLIVE

Shouldn't we oughta get out of here?

MANAGER DICK

Remain at your desk.

Exit Manager Dick. Clive gets up and goes to the window.

KATHY

Can you see anything?

CLIVE

Just them hippies.

KATHY

What are they doing?

CLIVE

It's like the goddamned garden of Eden out there.

Lights down on business office. Lights up on hippie kitchen. Kenny and Chloe are eating bread.

CHLOE

I love how comfortable I am in my body.

KENNY

Cool.

CHLOE

There's something wrong with the potatoes.

KENNY

Really?

CHLOE

Yeah. We'll have to harvest them now before it's too late.

KENNY

What is it? Blight?

CHLOE

No.

KENNY

Wilt? Fusarium? Verticillium?

CHLOE

No.

KENNY

Rhizoctonia canker? Black scurf?

CHLOE

No.

KENNY

Erwinia carotovora?

CHLOE

No.

KENNY

Soft rot?

CHLOE

No.

KENNY

Dry rot?

CHLOE

No.

KENNY

Ring rot?

CHLOE

No.

KENNY

Hm. Powdery scab?

CHLOE

No.

KENNY

Pinkeye? Silver scurf? Mosaic?

CHLOE

No.

KENNY

Mycoplasma? Vascular necrosis?

CHLOE

No.

KENNY

Greening? Hollow heart? Windburn?

CHLOE

Blackleg.

KENNY

Oh. I said that!

CHLOE

Did not. You said Erwinia carotovora.

KENNY

Yeah, that's what causes it.

CHLOE

Duh. It's the bacteria, not the disease.

KENNY

We'll have to harvest.

CHLOE

Yeah. That's what I said.

Lights down on hippie kitchen. Lights up on business office. Clive is looking anxiously out the window as Kathy works on her novel.

CLIVE

Man, I hate them freakin' hippies.

KATHY

What are they doing?

CLIVE

Swimming, playing, gardening. The works.

KATHY

You love them. You should join them.

CLIVE

Nah, I can't. I have to stay at my desk.

Enter Manager Dick with a new stack of papers.

MANAGER DICK

Clive! Why aren't you on seat? Listen, how are my ovens? Forget that. These are itemized phone records, insurance policy documents, and lease agreements. I want them copied by hand in triplicate and hidden away where I'll never see them. Kathy, great tits, very exciting.

Enter Mail Boy, running, breathless.

MAIL BOY

They're here! My god, they're here! They're in the elevator! They look so angry!

KATHY

The Huns? How interesting. What do you suppose they want?

MAIL BOY

They're out for blood! The fourth floor has been totally wiped out!

CLIVE

Sir, don't you think we should get out of here while we still can?

MANAGER DICK

Clive, let me put my terrible arm around your shoulders and whisper to you what the smart money says. Remain at your desk.

Manager Dick slams his papers down on Clive's desk. Clive hesitates but then sits down reluctantly. Exit Manager Dick.

CLIVE

Them hippies are killing me.

Lights down on business office, lights up on hippie kitchen. Kenny is playing guitar and he and Chloe are singing.

KENNY AND CHLOE

But it can't be a man cuz he does not smoke the same cigarettes as me! I can't get no!

Lights down on hippie kitchen, lights up on business office. Clive is up again, looking out the window. Kathy is at her desk. Mail Boy waits nervously at stage right.

KATHY

You should. You obviously want to.

CLIVE

Cannot. Must stay.

KATHY

You could.

CLIVE

I don't know...

KATHY

Go on.

CLIVE

Really?

MANAGER DICK (*from off stage*)

Remain at your desk!

MAIL BOY

They're coming! Oh my god they're coming down the hall! I can hear their mighty hooves!

There's no time left!

CLIVE

You know what, I think I will.

KATHY

Good for you!

Lights down on business office, lights up on hippie kitchen. Clive is there with Kenny and Chloe. Clive is kneading some dough.

KENNY

When you're done with the bread, I need you to get out there and harvest potatoes, friend.

CLIVE

It's not too soon?

KENNY

Disease has forced our hand here.

CLIVE

Aster yellow?

CHLOE

No.

CLIVE

Witch's broom?

CHLOE

No.

CLIVE

Jelly end?

CHLOE

Eww.

KENNY

It's blackleg.

CLIVE

Oh, right.

CHLOE

And after that could you milk the goats?

CLIVE

Sure.

KENNY

Good to have you aboard, son.

[END]