

Characters:

CLIVE: A man, well dressed in a suit and tie. Has well kept hair. Has been working exclusively with JERRY for his whole life. He works as an accountant. As does JERRY. CLIVE would love some spice in his life.

JERRY: A man, well dressed in a suit and bowtie. Has well kept hair. Has been working exclusively with CLIVE for his whole life. HE works as an accountant. As does CLIVE. JERRY decidedly would not love spice in his life. If he were to be a condiment, he would be mayonnaise.

(Scene opens on an office with two tables facing each other. Upstage of both tables we see a desk with a large box which reads DO NOT OPEN. CLIVE enters stage right, JERRY enters stage left. Both come on stage in synchronicity. They both take out their brief case and lay it on their respective tables. They both sit down. JERRY looks up at CLIVE. Walks over to very close to CLIVE and looks at his tie. He goes back and sits down at his desk. They both open-up their briefcases and take out old laptops. They open the laptops and boot them up at the same time.)

JERRY

It's Thursday.

CLIVE

It is.

JERRY

Thursday is bowtie day.

CLIVE

Has been for 20 years.

JERRY

It has.

CLIVE

Like clockwork.

JERRY

Swiss clockwork.

CLIVE

The Swiss do make the best clocks.

JERRY

That they do.

(Both look at their watches)

CLIVE

That they do.

JERRY

Like clockwork.

(They dive into their work. The clacking of mechanical keyboards in a somewhat musical rhythm fills the room. Suddenly, CLIVE stops typing.)

CLIVE

What about Thursday?

JERRY

Well its bowtie day.

CLIVE

Has been for 20 years.

JERRY

You're wearing a tie.

CLIVE

But it's bowtie day.

JERRY

Every Thursday.

CLIVE

(Looks down at his tie.)

And I'm wearing a tie!

(At the same time as JERRY)

Fantastic!

JERRY

Unacceptable.

CLIVE

(Realizing the taboo of excitement.)

Unacceptable!

(CLIVE closes his laptop, puts it aside, and brings out his briefcase. From his briefcase he pulls a bowtie. Hesitates.)

But what if it was a tie day?

JERRY

Pardon?

CLIVE

(Sticking his head above the divider now made by the briefcases.)

What if it was a tie day instead of a bowtie day.

JERRY

Well it hasn't ever been that way.

CLIVE

Not for the past 20 years.

JERRY

Not for the past 20 years. Now quick, we have work to do.

CLIVE

Yes, yes.

(CLIVE unclips his clip-on tie and clips on a clip-on bowtie. He places the tie back in his briefcase, closes his briefcase and brings his laptop back to the center of the table. All the while, JERRY is waiting expectantly. Once CLIVE opens his computer, they ready to work. Just before starting to type.)

Wait!

(CLIVE turns on his computer. They ready to work again, then start typing. The rhythmic typing stops once more.)

Is something different?

JERRY

Well yes.

CLIVE

What is it?

JERRY

You're now wearing a bowtie.

CLIVE

Yes, yes. But in the office.

JERRY

You did change it in the office, yes.

CLIVE

But is something in the office different?

JERRY

Other than your bowtie?

CLIVE

Other than my bowtie.

JERRY

(Looks around)

Well there's a box.

CLIVE

There IS a box!

(They go back to work in unison. CLIVE stops.)

But why is there a box?

JERRY

What a philosophic question.

CLIVE

There wasn't one there before.

JERRY

And now there is one.

CLIVE

Shall we investigate?

JERRY

I suppose we ought to.

(They go to investigate)

CLIVE

We ought to?

JERRY

I believe it is our duty to keep this office as expedient as possible.

CLIVE

That is our job.

JERRY

That IS our job.

CLIVE

So why "ought" we investigate this box?

JERRY

Well over the past 20 years we have learnt how to be perfectly expedient in this office. We set the thermostat to 21.6 degrees Celsius every day. We come in in our perfectly insulated clothes that we buy at the same tailor for the same price. Now these suits keep

us in optimal temperature to work in the conditions we must. Now say a box is introduced into this environment, as was the case with the time that you brought in a felt briefcase. That completely disrupts the carefully coordinated climate we have in this office of ours. This change in climate will reduce our work by 2.7% as we found in our second year in this office. Now if we look further than the climate differential that this box introduces into our environment and look at just the distraction that it creates for the both of us. Suppose we wonder about the box once every 2 minutes, and glance over at the box once every 5 minutes. This introduces 7 idle thoughts every 10 minutes which needless to say is going to disrupt the flow of our work. That's not even touching on the lighting! If the brown of the box reduces the light in that side of the room by –

CLIVE

(Interrupting)

Right! Let's investigate.

JERRY

Lets.

(They both close their laptops, stand up, and approach the box.)

Do not open.

CLIVE

Well why not?

JERRY

It says right there.

CLIVE

Do not open.

JERRY

Precisely.

CLIVE

Well what point is there to a box that can't be opened.

JERRY

Maybe it's decorative.

CLIVE

It's not a very nice-looking decoration.

JERRY

Admittedly not.

CLIVE

Decidedly not.

JERRY

Well that's a relief. I didn't quite like the look of it.

CLIVE

We should open it.

JERRY

Well that's silly.

CLIVE

Why is that silly?

JERRY

It says do not open. It's pretty clear on that.

CLIVE

But I'm a person.

JERRY

I've noticed.

CLIVE

And that's a box.

JERRY

Astute observation.

CLIVE

I like to think I have more authority than a box.

JERRY

Even if the box is telling you explicitly not to do something?

CLIVE

Especially if the box is telling me explicitly not to do something.

JERRY

What if it's a box from someone important? Who does have authority over us.

CLIVE

Well not many people have authority over us.

JERRY

Steve has authority over us.

CLIVE

Yes, but Steve hasn't been around for years.

JERRY

For 12 years.

CLIVE

And 81 days.

(Both stand. Look at each other. CLIVE looks back at the box)

But Steve isn't here.

JERRY

That he isn't.

CLIVE

So, let's open it.

JERRY

But what if he put it here.

CLIVE

But he hasn't been here for the past 20 years.

JERRY

That he hasn't.

CLIVE

Then it's settled.

(CLIVE reaches towards the box.)

JERRY

There has been downsizing.

CLIVE

Tragic really.

JERRY

We've already lost Janet.

CLIVE

I do miss Janet.

JERRY

Were you at her going away party?

CLIVE

No we were working.

JERRY

Ah, yes we were working!

CLIVE

(Starting to reach towards the box to open it.)

Why bring up the downsizing?

JERRY

Well what if this is a test?

CLIVE

A test?

JERRY

A test for us. To make sure we can still follow instructions.

CLIVE

We've been following instructions for 20 years.

JERRY

That we have.

CLIVE

And surely if they were to fire us they would do it without a test.

JERRY

They are very forward at this company.

CLIVE

Informative emails.

JERRY

Fantastic emails.

(Both look at the box. Pause.)

CLIVE

What if it's a promotion.

JERRY

A promotion.

CLIVE

Well yes. Steve does like a good risk taker.

JERRY

And a leader.

CLIVE

Businesses do love leaders.

JERRY

Maybe it IS a promotion.

CLIVE

But why have a promotion now?

JERRY

Well they are downsizing.

CLIVE

As they've done before.

JERRY

Maybe they're upgrading.

CLIVE

Upgrading and downsizing?

JERRY

More likely downsizing and upgrading.

CLIVE

Where would we upgrade to?

JERRY

Maybe we would be upgraded to work with Steve.

CLIVE

I don't care much for Steve.

JERRY

But the pay would be fantastic.

CLIVE

The others are horrendous as well.

JERRY

The view would be mesmerizing.

CLIVE

They tend to smell like fancy soups.

JERRY

And the computers futuristic.

CLIVE

I don't care much for fancy soups.

JERRY

It would be the dream.

CLIVE

It wouldn't be climate controlled.

JERRY

(Pause)

It would be a slightly sub par dream. I'm going to do it.

CLIVE

Do what?

JERRY

Open the box.

CLIVE

Even though it says do not open?

JERRY

Precisely because it says do not open.

CLIVE

But why?

JERRY

Well its obviously a test to root out the risk takers.

CLIVE

It may well be.

(JERRY goes towards the box and scoots CLIVE aside. He tries to find a way to open the box. He looks around it. Confused, he picks it up to look underneath. The top of the box slips up and all 4 walls of the box fall down revealing a single piece of paper. JERRY picks up the piece of paper.)

JERRY

Huh.

CLIVE

What is it?

JERRY

It says "You're fired".

CLIVE

I'm fired?

JERRY

No, I'm fired.

(Pause)

CLIVE

Well then.

(CLIVE goes back to his desk while JERRY continues to look at the piece of paper in disbelief. CLIVE closes his laptop and puts it aside. He brings out his briefcase, opens it up, and brings out a tie. He unclips his bowtie. Blackout).

Like the breaks in it - pauses and Jerry's monologue.

Appropriate to have the typing to be a stage direction. Focus on the physical comedy in the stage directions. Make the workspace a character in itself.

To keep an audience captured, need something compelling along with dry characters.

Throw a wrench in it.

Give focus such as an absurdly personified room.

To keep a hook, get to the point quickly or throw a wrench into it. Throw red herrings.