

LOVE YOUR WORK

a ten-minute play

by Eric Pfeffinger

RELENTLESS

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THE TIME

Now.

THE PLACE

An executive office.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

EXECUTIVE, expensive office, expensive clothes.

WORKER, nothing expensive

EXECUTIVE SENIOR VICE-PRESIDENT

VICE PRESI SENIOR EXECUDENT

JUNIOR DEVELOPER

PAPER PUSHER

REAR ADMIRAL

UNDERSECRETARY OF OVERSTATEMENT

GENERAL DE GAULLE

OFFSTAGE CROWD

all roles can be played by actors reflecting any background, physical description or gender identity.

A beautifully outfitted executive office: natural light, expensive stuff. WORKER sits in front of the desk, opposite the cheerful EXECUTIVE.

EXECUTIVE

Here's why I called you in here today. That thing? That you made? Is. Great.

WORKER

— Oh! Good.

EXECUTIVE

Very popular. It just keeps making money. Day in, day out. Moneymaking machine.

WORKER

So it is making money, then.

EXECUTIVE

Making me money, yep, yep, keeps on going and going and going and—

WORKER

— Sorry — making *who* money?

EXECUTIVE

Hm?

WORKER

It uh, continues to make *who* money?

EXECUTIVE

Yes. So to sum up: The thing you made? Great. The next thing you make? Better. *Way* better. It better be better. Because think about it: the thing you already made, the old thing?

WORKER

I mean, “old,” it was like a month—

EXECUTIVE

Even though it's great, we agree, capital G-R-eight, and it's swell that it made money—

WORKER

Who money though again?

EXECUTIVE

— It's not like we can just—. I mean *you* know. Time just keeps—. Pieces of sand falling through the glass thing. It's not like the thing you made is just going to keep just, just...

WORKER

Keep making money forever?

EXECUTIVE

Yes. Right. Exactly. — Actually. It might. It probably will. It will probably continue to make me money for the rest of my days.

WORKER

Ah. You definitely said *you* money.

EXECUTIVE

I said “me.”

WORKER

Right. What? You said, no —

EXECUTIVE

I did *not* say “you.”

WORKER

You said, well yes, direct quote, the *word* “me,” but in context *me* signifying *you*, which—

EXECUTIVE

I definitely technically never said “you.” I said—

WORKER

“Me.” I know but—

EXECUTIVE

Let’s make *that* person some money!

WORKER

You.

EXECUTIVE

Nope.

WORKER

“Me.”

EXECUTIVE

Hooray!

WORKER

Okay, but see, I don't just want to make "me" money, I also want to make *me* money.

EXECUTIVE

You lost me, but upshot, I guarantee they'll do just fine.

WORKER

Who?

EXECUTIVE

Whoever we're talking about.

WORKER

I wish there were a transcript we could read back.

EXECUTIVE

Focus! We need another amazing thing, just like the other thing, but different. I mean that's what you do, right? Making things? If you're not doing that... then I mean gosh, who even *are* you? What even is your life *purpose*?

WORKER

Okay now I feel like I'm talking to my parents...

EXECUTIVE

So gonna need you to get on that. Making another something. Y'know what, make two.

WORKER

And for doing that I'll get paid...

EXECUTIVE

Yes!

WORKER

I mean, amount-wise...

EXECUTIVE

What you got paid last time. ...(Almost.)

WORKER

Sorry?

EXECUTIVE

You're forgiven.

WORKER

No I mean what did you say?

EXECUTIVE
 “You’re forgiven.”

WORKER
 Before that.

EXECUTIVE
 “Here’s why I called you in here today?”

WORKER
 But well after that.

EXECUTIVE
 I’m in the weeds here, champ, I’m up to my thighs in the nutgrass, help me out.

WORKER
 Are you suggesting that I’d get paid less than before, for the same amount of work?

EXECUTIVE
 Yes. Plus a little more work.

WORKER
More work?

EXECUTIVE
 Same. Plus some. Same-Plus. Like a streamer. “Same Plus, now with more of less.”

WORKER
 Why more work?

EXECUTIVE
 Less staff. Fewer resources.

WORKER
Why?

EXECUTIVE
 Streamlining. Rightsizing. Marie Kondo. Decluttering. Think about it: did those resources really spark joy?

WORKER
 They sparked *sanity*.

EXECUTIVE
 Also this time you’re making something smaller.

Smaller—
WORKER

In a shorter time frame.
EXECUTIVE

Yeah but—
WORKER

In a smaller room.
EXECUTIVE

A smaller *room*?
WORKER

Technically not a room.
EXECUTIVE

What *is* it?
WORKER

There's a space on the roof near the air handling unit? Great view, fresh air, I'm jealous.
EXECUTIVE

What was wrong with the old—
WORKER

We needed the space.
EXECUTIVE

For what?
WORKER

I forget. No I don't. The greyhound rescues.
EXECUTIVE

In the *room*?
WORKER

Well we can't put them on the *roof*.
EXECUTIVE

Why do you need greyhounds?
WORKER

EXECUTIVE

We don't. You're right. That would be absurd. *Greyhounds*. Even as I heard me saying it I was like "What?" No. The room is for dressage.

WORKER

What?

EXECUTIVE

Ponies. You know what dressage involves, we're all grownups. Anyway, time's a-wasting, we got a two-week deadline and clock started ticking last week so zoom-zoom—

WORKER

How long do you think this new project is gonna make money?

EXECUTIVE

Optimistically? The answer rhymes with "flindefinitely."

WORKER

And naturally, that money will go to...

EXEC points at self.

WORKER points at EXEC.

Me.

EXECUTIVE

"Me."

WORKER

WORKER

...I want a cut.

EXECUTIVE

Well look who showed up to play. — You mean like a little cut, like a token little face-saving rounding error sort of a—?

WORKER

No I mean a nice cut, a nice, good, nice, nice — cut.

EXECUTIVE

Look, I respect you for asking. Respect the hell out of you. You feel it? The respect?

WORKER

No.

EXECUTIVE

It's palpable. Between us, like "Whoa now what is that, where did that come from?" But my question is: what have you done? For a cut?

WORKER

I made? The thing?

EXECUTIVE

But who made that possible? The infrastructure so people could use the thing? Answer: someone did. And I made sure someone did. I think. Ergo. Consequently. QVC.

WORKER

QED.

EXECUTIVE

LOL. I think you get where I'm CMF. That stands for "coming from."

WORKER

No it doesn't.

EXECUTIVE

But I don't mean to give you the wrong idea. We do spread the money around.

WORKER

You do. Good. So it's possible that some of it gets spread around to...

WORKER starts to point at self, until the appearance of EXECUTIVE SENIOR VICE-PRESIDENT.

EXECUTIVE SENIOR VICE-PRESIDENT

Hi, folks!

EXECUTIVE

We were just talking about you!

WORKER

So this is... who—?

EXECUTIVE

Executive Senior Vice-President. — We were discussing the people that it, the money, gets y'know—

EXECUTIVE SENIOR VICE-PRESIDENT

Spread around to? Guilty! Def gets spread to me. Gets spread *mighty nice*. But don't get me wrong, I am happy to share the wealth.

WORKER

Oh, good! — With...?

VICE PRESI SENIOR EXECUDENT

Me!

WORKER

Who?

VICE PRESI SENIOR EXECUDENT

Vice presi senior execudent.

WORKER

Your job title sounds like it's having a stroke.

JUNIOR DEVELOPER

Also me.

WORKER

And you me is who—?

JUNIOR DEVELOPER

Junior developer in partial charge of partial development.

PAPER PUSHER

And don't forget me, fellas.

WORKER

No how could we.

PAPER PUSHER

Super senior double-vice-elect paper-pusher and interim floyven glayven.

WORKER

Sounds like a lot of work.

PAPER PUSHER

Probably!

REAR ADMIRAL

Rear admiral, nice to meet you, ahoy.

UNDERSECRETARY OF OVERSTATEMENT

Hi! Undersecretary of overstatement.

WORKER

How long has that been a thing?

UNDERSECRETARY OF OVERSTATEMENT

Literally since before the very beginning of time.

GENERAL DE GAULLE

General De Gaulle on accordion, bonjour.

Beat. WORKER's waiting for more.

EXECUTIVE

Oh there aren't any more.

VICE PRESI SENIOR EXECUDENT

That would be excessive.

REAR ADMIRAL

Can you imagine?

EXECUTIVE

Plus they're on vacation this week. But every time the things make money, it benefits—

EVERYONE ELSE

“Me.”

EXECUTIVE

“Me” is elastic. It's inclusive. It contains multitudes. “Me” has room for everyone.

EXECUTIVE SENIOR VICE-PRESIDENT

Well, except—

EXECUTIVE

Right — I mean, it's not *infinite*.

WORKER

Nice words and everything — but it would be great if it all meant something.

EXECUTIVE SENIOR VICE-PRESIDENT

Don't get wrapped up in vaporous abstractions like “meaning” and “fair remuneration,” it'll only distract you from —

EVERYONE BUT WORKER

Making another thing!

WORKER

But why would I do that? In this context, within this system of “rewards,” why would anybody ever make a thing at all?

EXECUTIVE

Because you love it. Don't you love it?

EXECUTIVE SENIOR VICE-PRESIDENT

Isn't that why you started doing this in the first place? Because you loved it?

EXECUTIVE

You're so lucky. Lucky, right?

THE OTHERS

Yeah. So lucky. Lucky duck. Etc.

EXECUTIVE

Look at us. We're all just ordinary desk jockeys, y'know? Boring suit-and-tie drones.

WORKER

Not a single one of you is wearing a tie. Some of you aren't wearing long pants.

PAPER PUSHER

It's Tennis Thursday.

EXECUTIVE

Glorified office-bots is what we are. Aren't we? Am I right?

EXECUTIVES jovially imitate robots.

We don't love what we do. How could we? It's unloveable. It's not even interesting.

Nobody does what we do because they have a passion. We just — do it.

JUNIOR DEVELOPER

Someone's got to.

GENERAL DE GAULLE

And what do we get for it?

REAR ADMIRAL

Just vast sums of money.

EXECUTIVE

Because why else would we even bother? But look at you. It's not like you started making these things as a fallback until the Uber gig comes through. You do this because you're good at it. Because it's who you are. Because you love it.

VICE PRESI SENIOR EXECUDENT

You love it.

JUNIOR DEVELOPER

You love it.

VICE PRESIDENT SENIOR EXECUTIVE

Stop copying me.

EXECUTIVE

And we love your work.

WORKER

You do?

EXECUTIVE SENIOR VICE-PRESIDENT

We love your work.

THE OTHERS

We love your work.

UNDERSECRETARY OF OVERSTATEMENT

More than anything in the known universe.

WORKER

I appreciate that. But I'd also like it if you paid me for it. Fairly, I mean.

EXECUTIVE

Well — that just seems like overkill.

(to OTHERS)

Just me? It's a little — *right*?

THE OTHERS

Yep. Love *plus* fairness? That's a lot. Slow down! Etc.

EXECUTIVE

None of this is even about money. We're just here to let you do what you love. With a few resources. And a little time. And a couple people and that nice spot on the roof. How's that sound? We on the same page? You in?

Silence. Then:

WORKER

No.

EXECUTIVE

Come again?

WORKER

We're your bones. We hold you up. We bestow your shape. If we walk away, you'll crumple like a poorly pitched tent.

EXECUTIVE

But you won't walk away. That's not what you do. You do *this*. You don't walk away.

WORKER walks away.

EXECUTIVE SENIOR VICE-PRESIDENT

Well, shit.

PAPER PUSHER

Dramaaaaaaaaa.

VICE PRESI SENIOR EXECUDENT

This isn't us. It's them.

JUNIOR DEVELOPER

It's them.

VICE PRESI SENIOR EXECUDENT

(to JUNIOR DEVELOPER)

Seriously.

REAR ADMIRAL

I have to get back to the fleet.

EXECUTIVE SENIOR VICE-PRESIDENT

There is no fleet, Casey!

GENERAL DE GAULLE

Ze ponies will be getting hungry.

From off:

CROWD

Strike! Strike! Strike!

*The whinnying of ponies, off.
End of play.*