

Carrot

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An office. Managing Director Peter is sat at his desk. There's a knock on the door.

Peter: Come!

Enter Brian, the Union representative - a very serious, focused, cynical character, who speaks with an archetypal "working class" accent. Peter is the typical upper-class boss, and is initially gushing and obsequious.

Peter: Brian!

Brian: Peter.

Brian: Come on in.

Brian: Thank you.

Peter: Take a pew.

Brian: There doesn't appear to be a pew available, Peter, so if you don't mind I'll just sit on this ordinary chair.

Peter: Oh. Right. Fine. So...Brian!

Brian: Peter.

An awkward pause, as if Peter doesn't know quite where to begin.

Peter: Brian, Brian, Brian.

Brian: Peter, Peter, Peter. *(Another awkward pause, as Peter just grins inanely)* You wanted to see me.

Peter: Yes, that's true, I certainly did, Brian. Can't deny it. I wanted to see you, so I asked for you to come and see me. So that's er...presumably why you're here.

Brian: That'll be it.

Peter: Right. Good. Okay! First thing's first. *(He presses an intercom)* "Miss Brabasham..." Tea, Brian?

Brian: The tea break is at eleven hundred hours.

Peter: Yes, but we needn't be slaves to shop floor convention, Brian. Have a cup now.

Brian: I'll have my tea at eleven, with the rest of the men.

Peter: Right, well. Yes. Then so will I. Ah! Miss Brabasham – bring some tea in would you - at eleven." *(He glances at the clock, which is at just past nine o'clock)* I know. *(He releases the intercom)* So...Brian.

Brian: Peter.

Peter: Good holiday?

Peter: *(surprised and slightly suspicious)* All right, thank you.

Peter: Yeah, I bet. Came to find you last week. The err.. *(picking out the speech marks)*

with his fingers) “lads” on the shop floor told me you were away. Fantastic place, eh?

Brian: It was all right.

Peter: Yes, I was there a few years ago, Brian. Brilliant. Your first time?

Brian: No, I go every year.

Peter: Really? We must be paying you too much, eh? *(Peter laughs, Brian doesn't)*
Yes. Beautiful country.

Brian: How do you mean?

Peter: Climate doesn't suit everybody, of course, but if it's wall-to-wall sunshine you're after, you can't beat Turkey.

Brian: It was Torquay.

Peter: What? Oh. Right. Yes...I thought the lads said... anyway.

Brian: It rained all week.

Peter: Look, Brian – is it all right to call you Brian, by the way?

Brian: Fine by me.

Peter: Excellent.

Brian: Though the lads tend to call me Bob.

Peter: Oh, why's that?

Brian: Because it's my name.

Peter: Oh. So what's Brian?

Brian: That'll be somebody else's name.

Peter: Whose?

Brian: Probably Brian's.

Peter: I'm so sorry, Bob. Someone's given me wrong information here.

Brian: No bother.

Peter: This is terribly embarrassing.

Brian: Forget about it. Anyway. You wanted to see me.

Peter: Yes.

Brian: Or did you want to see Brian?

Peter: No Bob, it's you I wanted to see. No doubt about that. So, Bob, how long have you been working for me now?

Brian: Three weeks.

Peter: Oh, come now, Bob – you've been here a lot longer than that.

Brian: Yes, I have. But you haven't.

Peter: Fair point, Bob. Yes, can't deny it. So yes, technically, three weeks it is. But, here's what I was getting at, Bob - how long have you been working...for the firm?

Brian: Twenty-three years.

Peter: Twenty-three years!

Brian: And eight months.

Peter: Well, I take my hat off to you, Bob. I absolutely take my hat off to you. If I wore a hat, Bob, I would not be wearing it now. You know - tea wasn't the right answer after all. *(He grabs a whiskey bottle)* Celebrations are in order. I should have offered you something stronger.

Brian: Being under the influence of alcohol or other intoxicating substance on site is in direct contravention of company policy.

Peter: (*dropping the whiskey bottle into the wastepaper basket*) But I'm not going to do that, Bob, because, as you so rightly pointed out, it is strictly against company policy.

Brian: Health and Safety issue.

Peter: Absolutely Bob. And as you know, the health and safety of our people is my top priority.

Brian: I'm touched.

Peter: Oh, yes. There are some dangerous machines out there. Can you imagine what would happen if someone had an accident whilst under the influence.

Brian: You'd be fined.

Peter: This isn't about money, Bob. I always say there's no budget on safety, not in this firm.

Brian: So can I have the new PPE?

Peter: New...?

Brian: Personal Protective Equipment. I put in a claim last month for new goggles – haven't heard anything.

Peter: (*searching through some paperwork in a tray marked ACTION*) Oh, well it certainly hasn't come across my desk. But I give you my word, Bob, if it's new goggles you need, new goggles you shall have. After all, a pair of goggles isn't going to break the bank is it? How much was the claim for?

Brian: Nine hundred pounds.

Peter: Nine hundred p...for a pair of goggles?

Brian: A hundred and fifty pairs. For the men.

Peter: (*finding a screwed up piece of paper in a tray marked REJECTED*) Oh. They all want them, do they?

Brian: They've all got eyes.

Peter: Yes, but...what's wrong with their old goggles?

Brian: They're old.

Peter: Goggles are not a fashion accessory, Bob. I can't be expected to upgrade everyone's eyewear every time Elton John is featured in Hello magazine. Goggles are a safety item. Bottom line - they either work or they don't.

Brian: They don't.

Peter: What do you mean, they don't?

Brian: They're scratched.

Peter: Well there you go then – they must be doing their job perfectly. Better than having scratched eyes, eh Bob?

Brian: The men can't see out of them.

Peter: I think you're exaggerating, Bob. Let's face it, most of our men just have to press a red button the size of a cricket ball and stand back. I mean, we're not exactly asking them to forge complex documents here, are we?

- Brian:** How are they supposed to check the samples for irregularities if they can't see?
- Peter:** Can't they just peep out of the sides?
- Brian:** You said there was no budget on safety.
- Peter:** Exactly. No budget. I can't just magic up resources that aren't there.
- Brian:** So that's a no, is it?
- Peter:** Let's not dwell on the negative, Bob. Look hard enough, and there's always a "Yes!"
- Brian:** Have you rejected my claim for goggles?
- Peter:** Yes!
- Brian:** Fine.
- Peter:** (*offering him a cigarette*) Smoke, Bob?
- Brian:** Not on site.
- Peter:** (*instantly throwing the packet of cigarettes into his waste-paper basket*) Me neither.
- Brian:** Health and...
- Peter:** Abso-bloody-lutely. Can't beat it. Do you know why I was brought into the firm, Brian?
- Brian:** Bob.
- Peter:** Do you know why I was brought into the firm, Bob?
- Brian:** To cut costs.
- Peter:** To modernize. To bring the firm into the 20th century.
- Brian:** This is the 21st century.
- Peter:** Let's not run before we can walk. Do you know what this is?

He ceremoniously produces a nut and bolt.

- Brian:** It's an M8 50mill double-slotted-head zinc-coated roofing bolt. With nut.
- Peter:** That's right, Bob. An M8 50mill double-slotted-head zinc-coated roofing bolt. With nut. Otherwise known as...our bread and butter. Over a quarter of this factory is dedicated to bashing these little devils out. Do you know how many of these we sold last month, Bob?
- Brian:** Fourteen thousand seven hundred and nineteen.
- Peter:** No! No – that's how many we produced. Do you know how many we *sold*?
- Brian:** The lads are engineers, not salesmen.
- Peter:** Seven thousand, Bob. We sold seven K, and produced fourteen K. What does that tell you, Bob?
- Brian:** That my engineers are twice as good as your salesmen.
- Peter:** Take a closer look. Go on, it won't bite. Notice anything unusual?
- Brian:** No.
- Peter:** It's not one of ours.
- Brian:** How can you tell?
- Peter:** You can't – that's the point. This M8 50mill double-slotted-head zinc-coated

roofing bolt, with nut, is from Bradshaws.

Brian: Well there you go, then. Have a word with your previous short-sighted management colleagues.

Peter: How do you mean?

Brian: Fifteen years ago, they sold some of our M8 50mill double-slotted-head zinc-coated roofing bolt tooling plant to Bradshaws. No wonder it's identical.

Peter: Well, it might look identical, Bob, but it must be different in some way. You know why? Because last month, Bradshaws sold nearly ten times more of these than we did.

Brian: Perhaps you should employ some of their salesmen.

Peter: But then again, is it all that surprising, Bob? Their factory door prices are 40% lower than ours.

Brian: Well, you get what you pay for.

Peter: What you get, Bob, is an identical unit, for nearly half the price. Now I reckon on that basis, our salesmen are working bloody miracles selling any at all, don't you? And here's the killer, Bob. Here's the killer. Bradshaws didn't make this bolt.

Brian: You just said they did.

Peter: No, I said it was from Bradshaws, Bob. But they didn't make it, because Bradshaws don't make roofing bolts any more. Haven't done for two years. They import them - from China.

Brian: China?

Peter: Yes, Bob. This M8 50mill double-slotted-head zinc-coated roofing bolt, with nut, has come all the way here on a slow boat from China, and I can now walk into Bradshaws, our biggest competitor, and buy it from them, after they've added their 100% mark-up, 40% cheaper than I can make one in my own factory. Now what do you say to that?

Brian: Well, maybe we could make 'em quicker if we could see through our goggles.

Peter backs away, twitching and fuming, but controlling his temper.

Peter: Crack cocaine, Bob?

Brian: Not until the hooter goes.

Peter tosses it in the bin.

Peter: Quite right. You know, Bob, there are voices on the Board that think you may be overdue for a promotion.

Brian: What voices?

Peter: Just voices, Bob.

Brian: Do these voices sprout from heads?

Peter: Well, of course.

Brian: Which heads?

Peter: Just heads.

Brian: Double slotted heads?

Peter: Just heads, Bob.

Brian: Whose heads?

Peter: Well...mine for one.

Brian: You think I should be promoted?

Peter: Well...I've heard it said.

Brian: By your voice.

Peter: Yes.

Brian: Coming from your head.

Peter: Well, yes.

Brian: Who else?

Peter: Look, let's not get into personalities, Bob. The point is, as Union representative, you are very well respected in the firm.

Brian: Yes, I believe I am.

Peter: In fact, I'd go so far as to say, when you speak, the men listen.

Brian: They do.

Peter: And when I speak...

Brian: They laugh.

Peter: Laugh?

Brian: Like you say, Peter, it's a matter of respect.

Peter: Do the men not respect me?

Brian: Respect has to be earned, Peter. You can't do that in three weeks.

Peter: No. Maybe not. And that's why I need you with me.

Brian: With you?

Peter: Question is, Bob, can I count on your support?

Brian: Support for what?

Peter: *(suddenly his temper explodes)* We can't continue down this path, Bob. We have to start out-sourcing.

Brian: *(incensed)* You can't do that!

Peter: I have no choice, Bob.

Brian: That's the men's livelihood!

Peter's accent suddenly changes as he loses his temper. I've written it as Geordie, but go for any accent that the actor's comfortable with that might instantly suggest an earthy working-class feel – heavy Yorkshire, Welsh dialect, etc.

Peter: Oh, don't give me all that bollocks, man! It's over. Take it on the chin.

Brian: *(gob-smacked)* You've...gone all Geordie.

Peter: Aye. Well it happens when I'm all stressed out, man. I tend to go back to me roots.

Brian: So, you're...

He whips off his false collar and tie, revealing a blue overall beneath. Emotive music (perhaps brass band, or Elgar, etc) starts to build in the background.

Peter: Good working-class stock, Bob – just like yourself.

Brian: But...you were speaking...like a toff.

Peter: Aye, well I'm management now. That's what you have to do in management. You have to learn how to play the game. It's not what you know at this level, my friend, it's how you express it.

Brian: So...what *do* you know?

Peter: Oh, I've earned my stripes, don't you worry. At Bradshaws. Fifteen years on the shop floor.

Brian: Why didn't you say so? You'd have the respect of the men.

Peter: Aye – maybe the men, man. But not the Board, Bob. Put it this way, turn up to an interview sounding like Jimmy Nail, and you get offered a job on the shop floor, where you belong.

Brian: So you're turning your back on your own kind.

Peter: (*clutching a pile of papers from his desk*) Cancelled orders, man. Hundreds of them. We just can't compete any more.

Brian: Management have been saying that for years. There's always a way to squeeze the lemon – always productivity improvements.

Peter: Ah, away, man. Twice the output, with half the men? I don't think so. Not even you could pull that one off...(*suddenly screaming out the window*) ...will you turn that bloody radio off! (*The music stops*) Face facts, man. We're the laughing stock of the industry.

Brian: Why are you telling me this?