
The Office

by
Kate Hoffower

*premiered in January, 2001 at
Actors Theatre of Louisville*

*Directed by Pascaline Bellgarde
Dramaturg: Tanya Palmer*

Cast

One Jessica Browne-White
Two Shoshona Currier
Three Emera Felice Krauss

Scenic Designer: Brenda Ellis

Costume Designer: Marcy Rector

Lighting Designer: Andrew Vance

Sound Designer: Kate Ducey

Stage Manager: Erin Tatge

Assistant Stage Manager: Sarah Hodges

The Office was first produced in a staged reading at
Chicago Dramatist's Workshop

CHARACTERS

ONE
TWO
THREE

TIME

The present.

The Office

*(Lights up as an unassuming customer service representative enters
[THREE]. She is normal-looking, on the bland side. She takes a
seat at the upstage center desk and begins to shuffle papers. She
does not speak, but works quietly at her desk throughout the play.
She is rarely acknowledged by ONE and TWO but observes them
carefully.)*

ONE. I'm bored.

TWO. Me too.

ONE. I've never been this bored.

TWO. Me neither.

ONE. Never in my entire life.

TWO. Never. Not this bored.

ONE. I'm beyond bored.

TWO. I'm *beyond* being bored.

ONE. I'm beyond *being* beyond—

TWO. bored.

ONE. I'm—

TWO. so bored.

ONE. So very, very, very—

TWO. bored.

ONE and TWO. I

ONE and TWO. am

ONE and TWO. so

ONE and TWO. *bored.*

ONE. *(Stuffing a pencil in her ear.)* What time is it?

TWO. *(Stuffing a pencil in her ear.)* Nine a.m.

ONE. *(Stuffing a pencil in her nose.)* What time is it now?

TWO. *(Stuffing a pencil in her nose.)* Nine a.m. and three seconds.

ONE. (*Stuffing her remaining nasal and aural orifices with pencils.*) Now?

TWO. (*Likewise.*) Nine a.m. and three of the most boring seconds I have ever experienced in my life.

ONE. Never

TWO. ever

ONE. have

TWO. I

ONE. ever

TWO. been

ONE. this

ONE and TWO. BORED!

ONE. If I have pretzels on my desk today, and he comes by and eats them again without asking, I'm going to punch him.

TWO. Tell him that's all you can afford to bring for lunch on the miserable salary he pays you, and if he doesn't keep his hands off, you'll have him arrested.

ONE. If he fires me how much can I collect in unemployment?

TWO. Probably more than you're making now

TWO. If only he wasn't looking over my shoulder constantly—if he was just here part-time it wouldn't be so bad.

ONE. Yeah, well, good luck. He already works like two-hundred hours a week.

TWO. He'd have to cut down if he had a heart attack.

ONE. Great. I'll sneak up behind him and yell boo.

TWO. No. I'm serious. Think about it. The average person burns about two-thousand calories a day. And you have to eat thirty-five-hundred calories more than you burn in order to gain a pound. He's fairly sedentary, and he doesn't workout or anything.—And I know he

easily eats at least two-thousand calories a day already. So if we could just get him to eat a little more and gain what? About fifty pounds? Would that do it?

ONE. I don't know. It would help I guess.

TWO. OK. So how long would it take him to gain that much?

ONE. (*Hesitantly.*) Well, thirty-five-hundred calories times fifty pounds is ... (*She uses her calculator.*) a hundred-seventy-five-thousand extra calories. If he ate—let's say an extra five-hundred calories a day—that's like two extra candy bars—it would take

TWO. A hundred-seventy-five-thousand calories?

ONE. Yeah.

end TWO. OK. A hundred-seventy-five-thousand calories divided by five-hundred is—

ONE. three hundred and fifty days.

L TWO. Almost a year. But maybe it would take less than fifty pounds if we could add more stress to his life.

ONE. Yeah ... but how would we get him to eat the extra two candy bars a day in the first place?

TWO. It wouldn't have to be candy bars. I could bring in donuts every once in awhile. You could bring in cookies now and then. —And there's always holiday food!

ONE. But what if it works? What if we kill him and get arrested for murder?

TWO. We couldn't get arrested. We didn't *make* him eat it. Besides, he'll probably just have a mild heart attack and have to cut down his work week. That would be perfect.

ONE. I guess so. (*Changing the subject.*) So whadja watch last night?

TWO. Sunday movie. You?

ONE. I went to bed early.

TWO. You always go to bed early.

ONE. You always go home and watch TV.

TWO. No. Sometimes I go home and watch TV and read *People Magazine* and eat ice cream. —All at the same time.

(Pause.)

ONE. Jesus! Why are we still *here*?

TWO. I don't know.

ONE. I can remember being twelve years old and having my life

completely planned out. I was going to graduate from the Eastman School of Music, sing professionally until I was twenty-six, get married, have two children, and then work part-time—if I felt like it.

TWO. Yikes!

ONE. Well, *you* can't have dreamt of a career in customer service.

TWO. No.

ONE. No.

(Pause.)

TWO. I was going to be a brain surgeon.

(THREE laughs. ONE and TWO both turn to look at her. THREE quickly returns to work.)

ONE. A brain surgeon?

TWO. Yes! I remember watching cartoons one Saturday morning and seeing this commercial for some doll, and all these little girls in pink dresses were sitting around, very well-behaved, brushing its hair, practically melting with sweetness. And the next ad was a bunch of boys skating through a fantasy world of castles and dragons, yelling and screaming and having the time of their lives. And then the very next ad was for that same stupid pink doll! So I told my mom about it and she said "That's because girls are supposed to sit at home and have babies, and boys are supposed to go out and have a whole hell of a lot of fun and not worry about anything." So I said "Well I don't want to sit around and have babies. I want to have fun too." And she said "Great. Be a brain surgeon."

ONE. She said "Great, be a brain surgeon?"

TWO. She said "Great. Be a brain surgeon."

ONE. And?

TWO. And I took her seriously. I went to the library and started researching the brain. But then I started have trouble with math and science. I practically failed high school. And I eventually gave up med school dreams for art.... I've done some fantastic pastels of the temporal lobe.

ONE. My dad called me last night. It really scared me because he never calls, so I figured something must be wrong. I couldn't believe it was him. He said "Are you OK?" And I said "I'm fine, why?" and

he said "I just got a feeling that something was wrong and I wanted to call." And suddenly I thought—Yes Dad. Something *is* wrong. I want to be a singer. I've dreamt about it my entire life but somehow I've ended up here. I work for seven-fifty an hour. I file, I answer phones, and I photocopy, eight and a half hours a day, forty-two and a half hours a week, and every minute of every day my soul rots away just a little bit more. I'm twenty-eight years old and I'm dying. I'm already dead. I might as well be. I wanted to say "Make me seven years old again Daddy. Stand with me on the top of the diving board and hold my hand as I look a million miles down at the long black arrows on the bottom of the pool. Then squeeze my hand and tell me that everything is going to be OK. We're just going to count to three and jump."

(Pause.)

TWO. Take your bra off.

ONE. What!?

TWO. I dare you to take your bra off and wear it outside your clothes.

ONE. No! Why?

TWO. It will be a break from the monotony of our otherwise tedious and meaningless lives.

ONE. No!

TWO. I'll let you have the good stapler.

ONE. No.

TWO. I'll change the fax paper for you from now on.

ONE. No.

TWO. I'll teach you how to use Quark.

ONE. No....

TWO. Quark Xpress, the new version. I'll teach you how to set tabs, create master guides, and kern. You will learn how to make entries into the auxiliary dictionary, how to start modifying, and how to establish a baseline grid.

ONE. Will you teach me how to use the horizontal/vertical scale?

TWO. Yes!

ONE. OK, OK. I'll do it. But *you* have to do it too.

TWO. Why?

ONE. Because if you do, I'll agree to the heart attack thing. I'll start my part tomorrow by bringing in two dozen double chocolate donuts.

TWO. His favorite!

ONE. Exactly.

TWO. OK. Deal.

ONE. All right then. On your mark—

TWO. Get set—

ONE. Go! *(They both take off their bras underneath their shirts and re-hook them on top. There can be some ad-libbing, ouches and laughter. THREE watches for a moment then silently joins them. They do not notice her. THREE sits back down at her desk and resumes work while ONE and TWO finish.)* He's going to be here any minute.

TWO. He probably won't even notice!

ONE. He'll probably take one look and start rubbing himself like crazy.

ONE and TWO. Aggghhhh!!!!!!

(They laugh again and return to their desks. Pause. They begin looking for something to do.)

ONE. I am really bored.

TWO. Really, really bored.

ONE. Really

TWO. really

ONE. really

TWO. bored.

(Lights fade to black.)

END OF PLAY

Paper Thin

LINDSAY PRICE