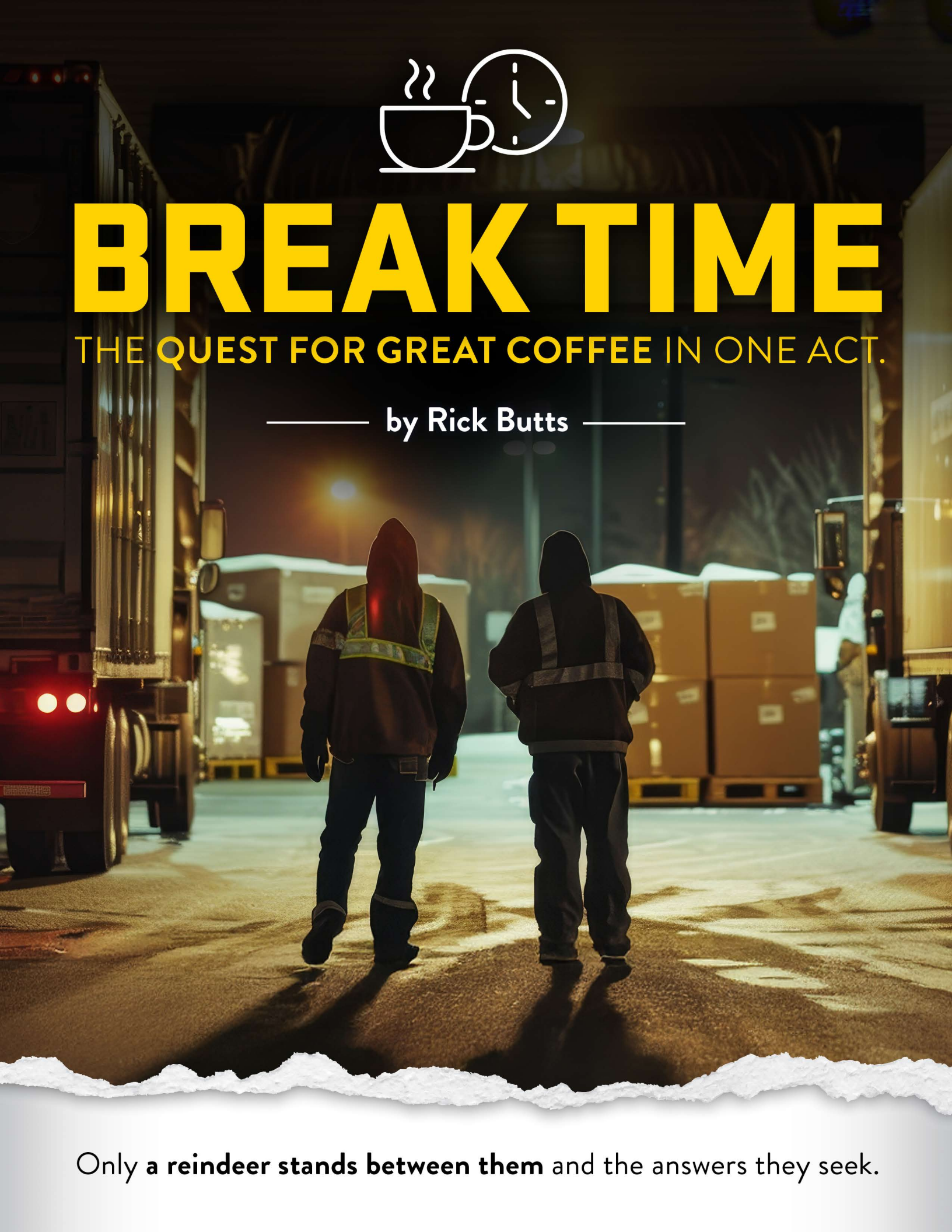




BREAK TIME

THE QUEST FOR GREAT COFFEE IN ONE ACT.

—— by Rick Butts ——



Only a reindeer stands between them and the answers they seek.

BREAK TIME

A one-act play

by

Rick Butts

The quest for great coffee

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

FREDDIE, a warehouse worker who loves coffee.

CHUCK, a warehouse worker who loves coffee.

BLITZEN, a toy reindeer about the size of a small teddy bear.

Roles may be cast with actors of any race and any vocal characteristics.

SCENE

On the right, a table with two chairs where two warehouse workers take their breaks. Two coffee mugs sit on the table. A few feet away on the left, the boss's office with a grey metal desk and chair facing the "door" out to the break table. A metal file cabinet is upstage centre near the desk. A small toy reindeer sits on the file cabinet with a view of the desk. Unseen offstage right, a coffee station brews cups of coffee with company-supplied coffee pods.

TIME

Now.

SYNOPSIS

Freddie and Chuck confront one of the perennial mysteries of the company coffee station: how can the boss brew wonderful coffee but never leave behind the pods? Driven by Freddie's ambition and Chuck's compassion for toy animals, they must enter the boss's office to find the answer. Once they go through that door, they come face-to-face with Blitzen the guard reindeer who holds the key to the knowledge they seek.

BLITZEN as prerecorded, voice-over or live from off-stage

BLITZEN is a toy reindeer that silently guards the boss's office and only engages with FREDDIE and CHUCK when they inadvertently wake her. Like the audience, FREDDIE and CHUCK are unaware that BLITZEN contains a camera and a microphone with the ability to record audio and video and transfer files to the company's network Cloud storage.

For stage purposes, a simple toy reindeer will do. BLITZEN's lines can be prerecorded and delivered on cue or simply spoken by an actor from an off-stage position with a mic.

The fun part of BLITZEN's character is that the audience doesn't know about her sophisticated surveillance capabilities until later in the play.

SETTING: The break table in the warehouse outside the boss's office.

AT RISE: Two warehouse workers in overalls CHUCK and FREDDIE sit at the table drinking bad coffee. CHUCK wears an orange hard hat. FREDDIE has a hockey team toque pulled down low over his ears.

(In the distance, the sounds of trucks backing up to a loading dock. Then a loud crash of metal or wood hitting the floor.)

CHUCK

Freddie! No! Don't say it!

FREDDIE

(Shouts at someone in the distance.)

Yeah, we'll get that.

CHUCK

Freddie! You got to stop volunteering us for every extra piece of crap work in this warehouse—

FREDDIE

Chuck! The bosses know we're the superheroes here. It goes with the territory, man!

CHUCK

Well, this superhero's on break.

FREDDIE

I can move a two-thousand pound fully loaded pallet with my mind.

CHUCK

Yeah, you and your forklift. Let me finish my coffee.

FREDDIE

You're like the Reed Richards of pallet stretch wrapping.

CHUCK

Coffee now. Stretch wrap later.

FREDDIE

Is it later yet?

CHUCK

You understand the concept of coffee break, right? As in we *don't work* right now. We *don't talk* about work.

FREDDIE

Cool! Glad you brought it up. Fine, we can talk about work. I think the boss is getting suspicious that we're getting suspicious.

CHUCK

You think? You've had us following him around for weeks now.

FREDDIE

Because I don't trust him. We can't just ignore what's going on. We got to let the big boss know. It's not fair.

CHUCK

The *big* boss? He's a little guy.

FREDDIE

I mean the *big big* boss. From head office.

CHUCK

The one who shows up once at year to give out turkeys?

FREDDIE

The very same.

CHUCK

You're nuts. Coffee. Time to drink coffee.

FREDDIE

Chuck, time to move to the next phase in the plan.

CHUCK

Which is—?

(Banging his hand on the table.)

No. Sorry. I don't want to know. Let's just pretend I didn't ask and you're not really here.

FREDDIE

It's us against him.

CHUCK

We can't. He's our boss.

FREDDIE

He's a *little* boss. Not the *big* boss. He's not being fair with us.

CHUCK

You're letting this get to you. It's the coffee thing again?

FREDDIE

When the *big* boss finds out he's been screwing us, he'll nail him and we'll get promoted into his job! And I'll get the *little* boss's office.

CHUCK

Seriously? That's not going to happen. First of all, they're not gonna fire him. And they don't promote *two* people into *one* job.

FREDDIE

They will if it's us. Because we're a team! Everyone knows that.

CHUCK

Whatever.

FREDDIE

(Not particularly musical singing.)

Chuck, we get by with a little help from our friends—

CHUCK

Stop.

FREDDIE

(More awkward singing.)

Chuck, you can lean on me when you're not strong—

CHUCK

Quiet.

FREDDIE

(Bad singing.)

Chuck, we're all in this together—

CHUCK

Oh, yeah.

FREDDIE

(Really terrible singing.)

Chuck, you just call out my name and I'll come runnin'—

CHUCK

Could you stop talking please?

FREDDIE

You know I was a DJ for a while? That's why I dropped out of college.

CHUCK

So you've told me a thousand times.

FREDDIE

Fine. No talking then.

(Pause.)

Want to sing?

CHUCK

No! No singing! No talking! Just coffee.

(FREDDIE chuckling. Then humming. Louder.)

CHUCK (CONT'D)

(Annoyed.)

You're doing it again, aren't you!

FREDDIE

I can't help it. I can't get that tune out of my head. I was a DJ when I was in college—

CHUCK

But *that* song. It's embarrassing. It's ridiculous.

FREDDIE

You love it. You were into it at our first show. The audience was yelling your name.

CHUCK

Our first show? You're crazy. It was a town hall. With the *big* boss. There wasn't no audience! It's employees from the warehouse.

FREDDIE

I remember the crowd was excited. They were screaming for more.

CHUCK

They were giving out the Christmas turkeys. Some were really puny. I can't believe you volunteered us to do this stupid song. We were awful!

FREDDIE

The crowd was shouting CHUCK! CHUCK! CHUCK!

CHUCK

To come up and get my turkey! I knew what you were planning. I was leaving!

FREDDIE

In front of the whole department, the *big* boss shook your hand.

CHUCK

He shook everyone's hand, Freddie! You're delusional if you think he knows us.

FREDDIE

It's about getting our name out there. With the *big* boss here! He asked us to perform. In front of the whole department.

CHUCK

What do you expect! You'd told him you'd written a warehouse Christmas carol!

FREDDIE

You were banging on that turkey like a tambourine!

CHUCK

My hands were freezing! I'm holding twenty pounds of frozen meat!

FREDDIE

I asked you for some rhythm, a bass line and a harmonizing lead, maybe a solo or two. I'm doing the heavy lifting with the vocals!

CHUCK

Like that's a surprise.

FREDDIE

Chuck, we're ready for the warehouse circuit. I got our stage name: *Better than Nothing*.

CHUCK

Better than nothing. The story of my life. Can't wait to get the t-shirt.

(Generic background music. Doesn't matter if it's rock, blues or pop. Freddie grooves and taps on the table like the ex-DJ he is. The point of this performance is that it's awful but enthusiastic.)

FREDDIE

Chuck, c'mon. Sing it with me. You know you want to. It's our theme song.

(Singing.)

Working in the warehouse doesn't suck.

My name's Freddie. My best friend's Chuck.

Lift another pallet, don't let it shake.

When it's time for coffee, it's time for break

Park the forklift, the trucks can wait.

We drink a little coffee on our break

Park the forklift, the trucks can wait.

(Speaking voice.)

C'mon Chuck. Sing it with me. I'm not gonna stop until you do. From the top.

(Singing.)

Working in the warehouse doesn't suck.

FREDDIE AND CHUCK TOGETHER

(Singing.)

My name's Freddie. My best friend's Chuck.

CHUCK

(Singing solo.)

His name's Freddie. I'm his best friend Chuck.

FREDDIE

Want to do the rest of the verses?

CHUCK

No Freddie. No more singing. Just coffee.

(Music out. Sounds of a truck backing up.)

CHUCK

Listen to that. Another truck. He's early. And I haven't had my coffee. We got a thousand pallets to load and wrap.

FREDDIE

Later.

CHUCK

And a hundred trucks coming in.

FREDDIE

Don't worry.

CHUCK

I worry.

FREDDIE

Don't worry. The forklift's down.

CHUCK

Again? We can't do anything without the forklift.

FREDDIE

My point exactly. Wait for it.

(In the distance, a door opening, closing.)

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

Boss's gone. The forklift's down. Now you got all day to sit and finish your coffee.

CHUCK

(Whispering.)

Is he really gone for the day?

FREDDIE

Don't whisper. He's at the dentist. That's his story. He says it might be all day.

CHUCK

All day at the dentist?

FREDDIE

Yup. Getting a wisdom tooth pulled. Good luck finding one.

CHUCK

(Sipping coffee, choking.)

I'd kill for a good cup of coffee.

FREDDIE

You smell *his* coffee? I'd kill *him* for that stuff.

CHUCK

I don't know if I can take another sip. We may as well get to work.

FREDDIE

If you pinch your nose closed, you get it down without smelling it. Take a big gulp.

CHUCK

(Swallowing and spluttering.)

What's wrong with your forklift?

FREDDIE

Oopsie! Looks like someone forgot to plug it in overnight.

CHUCK

It'll take hours to charge.

FREDDIE

Yup. Can't do much without the forklift. So sit back and enjoy your coffee.

(Both of them spluttering).

CHUCK

I wish we had his coffee. How we gonna get all this stuff done with your forklift down?

FREDDIE

Got it covered. Think like management. Blame it on somebody else.

CHUCK

That's awful! I could never do that!

FREDDIE

You wanna be a manager or not? When it hits the fan, you hit the can. Don't come out until it blows over. First rule of climbing the corporate ladder is keeping the crap off your blue fur shoes. Stepping in do-do makes for a slippery climb.

CHUCK

We've been schlepping toilets and bathtubs around this warehouse for fifteen years. You think leaving your forklift unplugged gets you promoted?

FREDDIE

Chuck, we're not schleps. We're the superheroes here. I'm the forklift whisperer. You're young grasshopper. Heck, we even got our own song—

(Music starts.)

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

(Singing.)

Working in the warehouse doesn't suck.

My name's Freddie—

CHUCK

(Yelling.)

No! No more singing.

(Music stops.)

FREDDIE

Suit yourself. When I make manager, I'll bring you along. You'll be sidekick manager.

CHUCK

(Swallowing and spluttering.)

Happy where I am, thanks.

FREDDIE

You'll need a nickname.

CHUCK

Chuck's just fine.

FREDDIE

How about the STRETCH WRAPPER!

CHUCK

Fine. When you make manager, you can call me whatever you like.

FREDDIE

Just saying. Managers, they get the good coffee. You can smell him a hundred feet away when he's doing the morning walk-around.

CHUCK

I know it's him when he's five racks over in bidets and sanitary drains.

FREDDIE

He's hoarding the good stuff, you know.

CHUCK

We searched every rack in the warehouse for his coffee stash.

FREDDIE

(Gesturing at the boss's office.)

We haven't searched *everywhere*.

(Fade up to ominous eerie sound.)

CHUCK

His office? No! We can't go in there.

FREDDIE

You know it's not fair. It shouldn't be allowed. He's got the good stuff in there.

CHUCK

It's his office! We go in there we could get fired!

FREDDIE

You went into the dumpster for his used pods.

(CHUCK looks at the office. FREDDIE waits.)

CHUCK

That was so stupid. I have the scars.

FREDDIE

There won't be raccoons in his office.

(Ominous eerie sound out. An angry raccoon chatters in the distance.)

CHUCK

You have no idea how bad-ass a raccoon can be when you're diving in his dumpster.

FREDDIE

It's like the old saying. A raccoon in the hand is worth two in the dumpster.

CHUCK

That's not a saying. And it's not cool to trivialize someone's emotional triggers.

FREDDIE

I'm helping you deal with it by accepting your responsibility for an incident you provoked with an innocent animal.

CHUCK

Innocent? He posted on Reddit that I was a predator!

FREDDIE

Why do you wear your helmet at coffee break?

CHUCK

It's a busy warehouse. It's for my own safety. Why do you wear that stupid hockey toque you got in high school?

FREDDIE

Retro's in. A fashion thing. So you wear a helmet to drink coffee. But you keep your earbuds in when you go dumpster diving? Safety thing?

CHUCK

I was on break. Listening to a podcast. My time.

FREDDIE

I warned you. Banged "dum da-da-da-dum dum" on the lid so you'd know it was a raccoon attack.

CHUCK

I kinda had my hands full with a really pissed off raccoon.

FREDDIE

They can be territorial.

CHUCK

Freddie! Territorial? He bit me!

FREDDIE

Okay, no one's fault. Just saying that if you go into a dumpster for the cause, you can certainly walk into the boss's office for a little look-see.

CHUCK

Freddie. He bit me *twice*. Not once. Twice. That demonstrates malice!

FREDDIE

The boss doesn't bite. If he did, you already got those shots.

CHUCK

No he wouldn't bite. He'd be kicking our butts if he found out we'd been in his office.

FREDDIE

You said yourself, it's not fair.

CHUCK

You said it's not fair. But you're right, it isn't fair.

FREDDIE

What do you think of his coffee?

CHUCK

I dream about it. Complex. Smoky. Nutty. A hint of floral. A fruity finish.

FREDDIE

And our coffee?

CHUCK

Fermented cat excrement. I have nightmares about it.

FREDDIE

There's only one coffee station. When *we* brew, we get crap-in-a-cup. *He* brews and he gets coffee to die for. And where are his used pods? Gone. Like they never existed.

CHUCK

It's a good thing I get up at night to pee. It wakes me out of the nightmares.

FREDDIE

It's probably the coffee.

CHUCK

Of course it's the coffee! Last night I'm dreaming I'm in bed with the decapitated head of a giant coffee pod on the pillow.

FREDDIE

It's probably too much coffee before bed.

CHUCK

It's too much *crap* coffee all day at the warehouse!

FREDDIE

(Gesturing at the boss's office.)

So what are we going to do about it? We got crap coffee while he hoards the good stuff. I figure it's all right there in his office.

CHUCK

I feel disrespected when he lords it over us like he's our boss.

FREDDIE

Putting aside that he is our boss, you've got a chance to stand up for the little guy, Chuck.

CHUCK

Freddie, why am I the little guy here? I'm bigger than him.

FREDDIE

It's a metaphor. His office is calling to you, little guy. The door's open. He's gone for the day. It's time to stop being a big baby and be the little guy. Against the man.

CHUCK

We're drinking CRAP-puccino!

FREDDIE

We are. His office awaits. You got this, Chuck. One small step for a man. And you're in.

CHUCK

Why me?

FREDDIE

Somebody's got to be the look-out.

CHUCK

Like you were the look-out last time?

FREDDIE

Chuck, you gotta let that raccoon thing go. It's not healthy to obsess.

CHUCK

NO WAY I'M GOING IN!

FREDDIE

His office is ten steps. Then you're in. You owe it to yourself to confront your fears. Searching his office will make you stop the self loathing. You have to forgive yourself. Search his office, Chuck. I'll keep watch from over here.

CHUCK

NOPE. NOT GOING IN. NO WAY!

FREDDIE

You're gonna throw away thousands of hours of surveillance we've put into this? The months we've been stalking him? Down every aisle. Behind every rack. Even in the john! We're on the verge of solving the greatest mystery of communal coffee stations of our time. How can a man brew coffee from a pod and never leave the pod behind?

CHUCK

Can I tell you about the dreams I'm having?

FREDDIE

Sure Chuck, you know I'm always here for you.

CHUCK

In my dreams, I see one of our pods walking towards me. It's a monster pod nine feet tall. With metal chest armour that says PUCKER UPPER MUSTY. He pulls a pod out of his mouth. It's one of ours. He vomits into it to make coffee—

FREDDIE

Wow. Sounds exciting. You should probably just scoot along now and search his office while no one's around—

CHUCK

He has a lizard tongue. He sucks up the coffee from the pod. He forces my mouth open.

FREDDIE

Good to get closure. Why not take a break? Maybe ransack his office for evidence—

CHUCK

He regurgitates that hot stinking liquid. Pushes it down my throat. I'm choking.

FREDDIE

Chuck, you might want to stretch your legs. Get a break from walking around all day in the warehouse. It would be a nice change of pace for you to search his office—

CHUCK

Then I see my ex-wife standing beside him. She's passing him pod after pod after pod. Talk about bitter!

FREDDIE

Huh. I did not see that coming.

CHUCK

I wake up and realize that it's just bad coffee. As bitter as my ex-wife.

FREDDIE

Chuck. Um Thanks for sharing. Okay, we'll do it your way. *I'll* stay out here. Okay?

CHUCK

Okay?

FREDDIE

You do the easy bit where no one can see you. You slip into his office, root around casually, look in his desk, go through his file cabinet. Maybe take a quick peek above the ceiling tiles as long as you're there—

CHUCK

I have five words for you. *I'm not going in. Period.*

FREDDIE

That's four words.

CHUCK

It's five words. I said *Period* out loud. It counts as a word.

FREDDIE

I can't believe you're being such a big baby.

(Takes a swig of coffee, grimaces.)

Fine. I'll go in.

(FREDDIE goes into the office. CHUCK watches him. Then he takes off his helmet and puts on a balaclava with the eye holes in the back. He puts his helmet on and follows FREDDIE into the office.)

CHUCK

Don't call me a baby. And I'm not staying out here by myself.

FREDDIE

(Looking around the office.)

Bosses sure do get nice offices. Big window. Big desk. Big chair. With wheels on it—

(CHUCK doesn't see the file cabinet, walks into it and falls to his knees. BLITZEN falls to the floor.)

FREDDIE

(Reacts. Stares at Chuck.)

Chuck! Whadda ya doing?

CHUCK

(Heavy breathing, voice muffled.)

I didn't see it.

FREDDIE

What's on your head?

CHUCK

(Heavy breathing, voice muffled.)

A balaclava.

FREDDIE

You know the eye holes go in front? Why're you wearing that?

CHUCK

In case someone sees us. If they can't see your eyes, they can't identify you. Like in movies where a guy pulls his hat down so no one can recognize him. It's the eyes.

FREDDIE

You look like a human sock puppet. Crashing into his file cabinet and knocking things over. Yeah, no one looking in is going to find that the least bit suspicious.

CHUCK

Yeah, that's what I figured.

FREDDIE

You're still wearing your helmet. With your name on it. Is that part of the disguise too?

CHUCK

(Takes off the hat. Holds it close to his face. Puts it on backwards.)

Geez, you're right. Good catch. I'll turn it around so they won't see the name—

FREDDIE

Relax. Take off the balaclava. He's gone for the rest of the day.

CHUCK

(Takes off the balaclava.)

Okay. I can breathe better anyway.

FREDDIE

Relax. Think of it this way. If we *were* up to something, would we be sneaking around?

CHUCK

But we *are* sneaking around.

FREDDIE

Exactly. If anyone sees us, we tell them we're picking six urinals for an order. We can't find them over in Sanitary Satisfaction. So we're looking for them here.

CHUCK

Six urinals in his office? Where would he put them?

FREDDIE

That's my point. That's why we're searching.

CHUCK

He does have a nice office now that I can see.

FREDDIE

You knocked his toy reindeer off the file cabinet. Put it back.

CHUCK

(Picks up BLITZEN.)

It's a Christmas ornament. Why keep something from Christmas around all year?

FREDDIE

Really? You're asking me? I don't know. It's from his kids. One of the ex-wives dropped it off because he's not allowed to see them until he pays up.

CHUCK

He's keeping money that's for his kids?

FREDDIE

Yeah, I guess. And hoarding the good coffee. A right knob on two counts then.

CHUCK

You never know what goes on in people's private lives.

FREDDIE

Um, that's why they're *private* Chuck. But whatever he's got going with this reindeer is too weird for me. I see him smiling at it and talking to it like it's a pet bird or something.

CHUCK

Maybe he's just lonely?

FREDDIE

Lonely! More like crazy! Put it back.

(CHUCK puts BLITZEN on the file cabinet.)

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

First thing he does every morning is stand in front of it chatting away. Right, Blitzen?

BLITZEN

Uh huh.

(CHUCK and FREDDIE stare at each other.)

FREDDIE

You hear that?

CHUCK

Uh huh? Uh huh.

FREDDIE

You heard *un huh* twice?

CHUCK

No. Once. I heard *uh huh* once. I was saying *uh huh* to you that I heard *uh huh*.

FREDDIE

Who said uh huh first?

CHUCK

(Points to BLITZEN.)

That reindeer!

FREDDIE

Give it here.

(CHUCK passes BLITZEN to FREDDIE who turns her over and pokes her roughly.)

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

Ok reindeer, talk.

(No response from BLITZEN.)

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

(To BLITZEN. In a teasing voice.)

Cat got your tongue, reindeer? Whadda ya got to say for yourself, my *deer*?

(No response from BLITZEN.)

CHUCK

Freddie, her eyes. They flashed.

FREDDIE

Chuck, you're seeing things.

(To BLITZEN. Teasing voice.)

I'm poking her eyes. They're not flashing.

CHUCK

Give her back. Stop hurting her.

FREDDIE

It's probably one of those talking toys. You press a button somewhere and it says stuff.

(To BLITZEN. Louder.)

BOO ya filthy cari-BOO! Should I give you back to Uncle Chuck so he can pull your antlers off—

CHUCK

No! Uncle Chuck would never hurt Blitzen—

BLITZEN

Uh huh.

FREDDIE

The eyes flashed. I must have hit the button.

(He bangs BLITZEN's head on the desk.)

Maybe if I kill you first—

CHUCK

Stop it! Don't kill her!

FREDDIE

Be cool. No one's getting killed here today.

(Holds BLITZEN up to his face.)

Unless this reindeer's gonna be a rat and tell the boss Freddie didn't plug in the forklift.

CHUCK

She won't be a rat!

FREDDIE

Maybe we should rip her head off. It's not the time to go chicken over a reindeer.

CHUCK

I don't approve of cruelty to animals!

FREDDIE

It's a Christmas ornament!

CHUCK

She still has feelings. Give her. She's going back on the file cabinet where she's safe.

(CHUCK takes BLITZEN, puts her on file cabinet.)

FREDDIE

You're getting soft. No wonder you got your ass kicked by a raccoon.

CHUCK

(To BLITZEN. Soothing voice.)

You sit there quiet. No one's going to hurt you, Blitzen.

BLITZEN

Uh huh.

FREDDIE

Did you touch the button again?

CHUCK

No.

FREDDIE

(To BLITZEN.)

Blitzen?

BLITZEN

Uh huh.

FREDDIE

(To BLITZEN loudly.)

Blitzen!

BLITZEN

(Loudly.)

Uh huh.

FREDDIE

(To BLITZEN softly and slowly.)

Blit . . . zen!

BLITZEN

(Softly and slowly.)

Uh . . . huh.

FREDDIE

(Nervously sits down in the boss's chair, rocking.)

Just leave it alone. We got work to do. Search everywhere. I'll check out the boss's chair.

CHUCK

Are we still looking for the urinals?

FREDDIE

(Gives CHUCK the thumbs up.)

Yeah, sure Chuck. And look for the coffee too.

(Throughout much of this scene, CHUCK has been closely watching BLITZEN's eyes.)

CHUCK

(Slowly.)

Freddie, the eyes are flashing again—

FREDDIE

You know this chair does a full 360! Wow. You can almost tip right back—

CHUCK

(Slowly.)

Now the nose is flashing. Did you turn on the nose?

FREDDIE

I gotta get a job as boss. I barely touched the nose. Except for whacking it on the desk.

CHUCK

(Goes to the window downstage.)

The boss has a great office. This window is huge!

FREDDIE

(Opening drawers.)

So many drawers! You check out the ceiling tiles. I'll search for secret compartments back here.

CHUCK

(Looking out the window downstage.)

You see the whole parking lot from this window.

(Long pause while he stares at something. Suddenly alarmed.)

Freddie! His parking spot! He's still there in his car!

FREDDIE

Get out of the window! Down!

(CHUCK dives to the floor.)

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

What's he doing?

CHUCK

(On the floor, crawls frantically to the door right.)

I can't see. I'm on the floor.

FREDDIE

Get up. Wait. Stay down. Now look out. But not when he's looking back.

CHUCK

(On the floor, crawls to the window downstage. On his knees, peeks out at the parking lot.)

His car's moving. Something must be wrong.

FREDDIE

What's wrong? How do you know something's wrong?

CHUCK

(On his knees, peeking out.)

Because he's slowing down . . .

FREDDIE

Why's he slowing down? Chuck?

CHUCK

(On his knees, peeking out.)

He's stopped at receiving.

FREDDIE

Oh my God. He forgot something. He's coming back. We better get out of here—
(Starts to run to the door right.)

CHUCK

Freddie, stop!

(FREDDIE freezes, stands still in full view of the window.)

CHUCK (CONT'D)

I mean stop because he's out of his car and looking back at his window.

(FREDDIE drops down with a thud and crawls around in circles. He bumps the file cabinet and BLITZEN's eyes start flashing.)

BLITZEN

Have either of you fallen? Do you need me to call 911? Or just sound a very shrill annoying siren that will bring everyone in the building to your assistance?

(Short blast of emergency alarm.)

FREDDIE

(Makes the shssh sign to CHUCK. Whispers.)

Don't tell her anyone's here.

CHUCK

(Nods, makes the thumbs up sign to FREDDIE. Whispers.)

Blitzen, thank you for asking. No one's here. We're fine.

(FREDDIE slides a finger across his throat.)

CHUCK (CONT'D)

(Trying to figure out what FREDDIE wants him to say.)

Except Freddie?

(FREDDIE shakes his head no, no no.)

CHUCK (CONT'D)

No, not Freddie? But Freddie's fine by the way. Thank you for asking.

(Pause.)

And this is Chuck. Um . . . I'm fine too.

BLITZEN

You're welcome, Chuck. Is Freddie okay? He sounds stressed. And you're on the floor.

CHUCK

We're just kneeling to avoid detection by the boss.

(A car horn goes *beep-beep* in the parking lot.)

FREDDIE

What's happening outside!

CHUCK

It's Marie. He's picking up Marie from receiving. She's getting into his car.

FREDDIE

(Crawls to the other side of the window.)

MARIE! The hottie! You know what this means?

(A car speeds away.)

CHUCK

She has the same dentist?

FREDDIE

No! She's the missing link!

CHUCK

Fine. Missing link. Who woulda thought? What are the chances? She's the missing link. After all these months of tailing him. Like I'm so freaking happy we've figured this out.

FREDDIE

I don't think you're appreciating the implications of what we just uncovered here.

CHUCK

I've uncovered that my knees are killing me. Can I get up?

FREDDIE

Get up. But stay down. What's happening now?

CHUCK

(Stands with his back downstage on one side of the window.)

They're gone. You can get up.

FREDDIE

(Stands with his back downstage on the other side of the window.)

Marie's the break we've been waiting for.

CHUCK

Yeah she is. How?

FREDDIE

Hired two months ago. By the boss. She's hot. She's into coffee. Isn't it obvious?

CHUCK

She's into hot coffee?

FREDDIE

Chuck, work with me here. They're doing flirty-flirty from day one. He's drinking the crap coffee we drink. Suddenly he's drinking the good stuff. She's got the *same* coffee!?

CHUCK

The other day, I thought it was the boss in flex drains. I smell his coffee over the rubber. I swing in and it's Marie! At the four-inch corrugated. Drinking the boss's coffee!

FREDDIE

She's the Eve of plumbing supply. This changes everything. We need a new plan.

CHUCK

Yeah. New plan.

(Pause).

So what's the plan?

FREDDIE

Later. We make a new plan later. We got to find out the name of their coffee.

BLITZEN

Lat-a-luv Beans Cream Royal Chocolate Espresso Yourself.

(They take a moment to consider what they heard.)

CHUCK

It's a sign from God.

FREDDIE

No. It's that undercover caribou. Blitzen.

(Points to BLITZEN on the file cabinet.)

BLITZEN

(Wild laughter before speaking.)

Uh huh.

(FREDDIE and CHUCK stare at each other.)

BLITZEN (CONT'D)

You guys should see your faces!

(More hysterical laughter.)

BLITZEN (CONT'D)

If you don't mind, could you remind the boss it's time to re-order his coffee.

FREDDIE

Uh oh. I hope it's not what I think it is.

CHUCK

A talking Christmas ornament?

FREDDIE

A talking camera.

CHUCK

Freddie, give me your toque.

FREDDIE

Why?

(FREDDIE gives CHUCK his toque.)

CHUCK

Your toque, man! Give it. Distract her so I can get behind her. Don't want her to bolt.

FREDDIE

So whadda ya think of that Blue Jays Dodgers series, eh Blitzen?

BLITZEN

Uh huh.

(CHUCK sneaks to one side of the file cabinet.
Then jumps up to bag BLITZEN with the toque.)

CHUCK

Freddie! Got her. My dad used to say if you get a bag over them, they can't pick you out in a police line-up later. She's bagged up. I left it loose so she can breathe.

FREDDIE

Don't say my name. Don't give her anything more she can use to identify us.

BLITZEN

(Sound muffled by FREDDIE's toque.)

It was probably the most exciting game seven in World Series history. Weren't you a Yankees guy when you were a DJ, Freddie? Who would you like me to identify, Freddie?

CHUCK

(Loud whisper.)

We should get out of here.

FREDDIE

Calmly. Don't act suspicious.

CHUCK

Shouldn't we get down? Stay out of sight of the camera?

FREDDIE

You just covered it up.

CHUCK

What if she's got x-ray vision?

FREDDIE

Fine. Get down. I thought you had bad knees.

CHUCK

(Gets down awkwardly. Sees the bottom drawer of the file cabinet.)

Wait! The bottom drawer of the file cabinet. It says *Secret Stash of Lat-a Luv Beans Cream Royal Chocolate Espresso Yourself*.

FREDDIE

(Rips open the drawer. Pulls out coffee pods.)

The boss's coffee! Holy Cappuccino POD-MAN. It's a mother lode. The good stuff. Give me your helmet.

(He loads the helmet with pods, runs out of the office, then exits right. CHUCK grabs the toque, races out to the table. FREDDIE comes back with two mugs. At the table they drink coffee.)

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

(Takes a big slurp of great coffee.)

Chuck my boy, that was close. Here's to Freddie and Chuck sticking it to the man!

CHUCK

(Slurping.)

I can't believe we got away with it.

FREDDIE

And that stupid reindeer. Where's my toque?

CHUCK

There. On the table.

(Reaches for his toque. Sees BLITZEN. Jams his toque over it.)

FREDDIE

Holy CRAP-puccino! You brought that thing out here with you! Blitzen!

BLITZEN

Happy Hanukkah, Freddie. Merry Christmas, Chuck.

CHUCK

Keep it covered. She might not know it was you who beat the crap out of her, Freddie.

FREDDIE

She talked you into letting her go. You're way too friendly with her. And stop saying my name.

CHUCK

Sorry Freddie. I mean, Mr. Smith.

FREDDIE

Chuck, you're an idiot. You'd take a hostage and let them live stream their kidnapping!

CHUCK

We couldn't leave your toque in there. I grabbed it. I didn't know she climbed in. Maybe she's motion activated. If we don't move, she can't see us?

(He freezes.)

FREDDIE

No, no, no. It's two-way audio. With recording. You heard her in there spilling the beans on the boss. She'll turn on us to save her own velvety skin.

CHUCK

Maybe she's only audio *out*. Like my earbuds when I'm listening to a podcast and you call me. I hear you. That's audio out. Right *out* into my ears.

FREDDIE

Your earbuds pick up everything! This stool pigeon is probably listening to us now.

BLITZEN

That's right, Freddie. In addition to 4K video, I have full audio capabilities. Time and date stamp on everything I record. There's nothing I miss.

CHUCK

How do we know you're actually recording us?

BLITZEN

(In CHUCK's voice.)

How do we know you're actually recording us?

CHUCK

Freddie. Um, Mr. Smith. Have you got a plan for this?

FREDDIE

A plan? Up to our eyeballs in reindeer doo-doo without a doggie bag.

BLITZEN

Do either of you have an SD card with you? You boys have been so active, I've reached the maximum recording time I have available for this movie we've been making together.

FREDDIE

No. No SD card.

BLITZEN

No problem. I will need to delete the files for the last hour and start recording over again. All the material we've recorded will be erased permanently from my memory.

(CHUCK and FREDDIE stare at each other.)

BLITZEN (CONT'D)

Freddie. Chuck. You still there? I can't see you. Should I erase everything and start over?

FREDDIE and CHUCK TOGETHER

Yes please!

BLITZEN

Freddie, please take your toque off me so I can see you and begin authenticating. Look into my eyes.

(FREDDIE uncovers BLITZEN and moves his face so she can see his eyes.)

BLITZEN (CONT'D)

Thank you Freddie. Now Chuck, your turn please. Smile.

(CHUCK moves so BLITZEN can see his face. He smiles broadly.)

BLITZEN (CONT'D)

Thank you. All the recordings of our time together are uploaded to the company's Cloud.

CHUCK

That's great! All gone. In a Cloud.

(END OF PLAY)

Notes about sound cues indicated in this live stage script

This script indicates sound cues which are recommended when it is performed as a radio play. In the live stage version, such cues may be inserted and faded out at the discretion of the director to the extent they are manageable. They may be delivered live from an off-stage position or prerecorded.

Some sound cues are necessary in the live stage version. For example, the loud crash of metal or wood hitting the floor as the play opens. The off-stage door opening and closing is also helpful to signal that the boss is leaving, underlining how closely Freddie tracks the boss's movements.

The generic background music that accompanies Freddie's song *Working in the warehouse doesn't suck* is certainly desirable but can be of any sort of sound file that doesn't require rights acquisition. Or the music can be omitted completely with the actors singing badly and enthusiastically unaccompanied.

Some sound effects add context and are recommended, such as the noises of trucks backing up and loading in the distance.

Other sound effects are helpful in advancing the story but can be omitted and addressed organically through actor performance such as the boss's car *beep-beep* from the parking lot outside and the sound of the car racing away. Some sound effects are simply fun and help the story along such as Blitzen's short blast of an emergency alarm and the chirping of an angry raccoon.

This play can work on a simple set as actors "create" doors and windows (see sketch).

