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SYNOPSIS: Part office comedy and part absurdist deconstruction of modern America, *Spats* finds Jones attempting desperately to get back to work after his predilection for a certain dapper shoe accessory sparks an unforeseen fad and/or revolution.

CAST OF CHARACTERS
*(4 MEN, 3 WOMEN)*

JONES (m)
BOSS MAN/PROTESTOR (m)
SMITH/ZEALOT#1 (m)
ZEALOT/POLITICIAN/REPORTER #2 (m)
REPORTER #1/PROTESTOR/GIRL (f)
ZEALOT/SPORTS STAR/PHTOGRAPHER (f)
PROTESTOR #1/ACTRESS (f)

SETTING

AT RISE:
A generic corporate office. Desk center stage. JONES is seated at the desk, staring out at the audience. We cannot see his feet. On either side of him are two bins, one labeled IN and one labeled OUT. IN is piled several feet into the air. OUT is empty. Beat. JONES turns to IN, stretches up, and pulls down the first sheet of paper. He reaches into his drawer and pulls out an unsharpened pencil. Sharpens it with the sharpener on the desk. Removes the pencil. Blows on the tip. JONES luxuriously brings the pencil down, a thrill of anticipation shaking his frame as the point approaches the page. Just as the pencil is about to make contact...

BOSS MAN: Jones! (JONES pulls the pencil back as BOSS MAN enters.) What is the meaning of this? (JONES turns and waits for BOSS MAN to continue.) Is this company a joke to you? (Pause. JONES shakes his head.) Is your work a joke to you? (Pause. JONES shakes his head.) Am I a joke to you? (Pause. JONES shrugs. BOSS MAN barrels on, oblivious.) I'm a patient man, Jones. And I'm willing to overlook many deficiencies in an employee. If you were lazy or inept or had the decency to simply steal office supplies like your coworkers, I could let it slide. But Jones, what, I repeat, what am I supposed to do in a case like this where the infraction is so vicious, so insidious, so utterly beyond the pale? (Beat. JONES waits.) I suppose you expect me to believe you have no idea what I'm referring to? (JONES is silent.) Stand up. (JONES stands.) Move to your left. (JONES moves out from behind the desk.) What, may I ask, are THOSE? (BOSS MAN points furiously at JONES'S feet. JONES is wearing spats.) You might have been able to pull these kinds of shenanigans at your last job, but not on my watch. Mark my words, Jones...take one step out of line and I will make it my personal crusade to see you get exactly what's coming to you. Get my drift? (JONES nods. BOSS MAN narrows his eyes and backs painstakingly offstage. Beat. JONES shakes his head and sighs. He returns to his desk and sits. Picks up the pencil, which resumes its slow arc toward the page. Just as it is about to make contact...)
SMITH: Psst. (JONES looks around. Sees no one. Turns back.) Psst! (JONES looks around. Sees no one. Pause.) Over here... (JONES turns in the direction of the voice. Slowly, a pair of eyes peep over the top of the water cooler.) It's me, Smith. (JONES is silent. The rest of SMITH'S face appears over the water cooler.) From accounting? (JONES is silent. SMITH steps out from behind the cooler.) Don't worry, I'm a friend. (SMITH slowly pulls something out from behind his back and holds it up. It is a pair of spats. JONES is silent.) You don't need to speak. I know responding might compromise your mission. I just want you to know that what you're doing here—what you're trying to accomplish—has not gone unnoticed by me. Or by others. (SMITH leans down and snaps a spat on.) There's a group of us. Small as yet, but getting bigger with each passing day. We believe in the spat and want to bring your message to the masses. To usher in the coming revolution...we will be held down no longer! (SMITH leans down and snaps the other spat on. He rises majestically.) We're setting up meetings. In secret, of course, very underground—the enemy has eyes and ears everywhere. But we have found a place...look in your drawer. (JONES opens his drawer and pulls out a folded piece of paper. He unfolds it and stares.) It's a map. To the “Spat Spot.” We will meet there by moonlight on the next new moon. Just give the passphrase when you get there...“the horse kicks its shoe off at midnight.” Until then...solidarity! (SMITH salutes and clicks his spats together. He recedes behind the water cooler again and disappears. Beat. JONES crumples up the map and tosses it in the waste basket. He turns to pick up the pencil, when suddenly....)
REPORTER #1: There he is! Mr. Jones! A moment of your time! (A group of REPORTERS and PHOTOGRAPHERS enters and steps to the desk. JONES turns and is blinded by the flashbulbs, dropping his pencil. Aside.) Shoot his right profile...the nose is more hooked on that side...gives his eye a strange glint, sort of “crazed...” (To JONES, louder.) Mr. Jones, this statement you've made is quickly progressing from fad to full-blown phenomenon. What led you to make such a life-altering decision? (JONES opens his mouth to speak.) Of course, of course! (Taking a note.) “Words cannot express my feelings. Suffice to say, something had to change.”

REPORTER #2: A vow of silence in support of your cause...how inspiring. Yet would you agree it is these kinds of tactics that have some concerned citizens calling your supporters a cult, rather than a special-interest group? Just blink for yes... (A camera flashes directly in JONES’S face, and he shuts his eyes against the glare. Taking a note.) Acknowledges cult status...just one more question, Mr. Jones...what is it you hope to achieve? (JONES is distracted by another barrage of flashes.)

REPORTER AND REPORTER #2: (Taking notes.) “No comment.”

The REPORTERS and PHOTOGRAPHERS start to edge quickly out of the room.

REPORTER #1: Thank you, Mr. Jones—
REPORTER #2: We're looking at a cover feature—
REPORTER #1: Story of the century—
REPORTER #2: Win the Pulitzer for sure—
REPORTER #1: And the best part of all...
REPORTER AND REPORTER #2: You know exactly what people want to hear.

The REPORTERS and PHOTOGRAPHERS are gone. Beat. JONES looks at his pencil. He waits. Suddenly, loud stomping and chanting is heard. JONES shakes his head and sets the pencil down as a group of PROTESTORS enters holding signs, chanting, etc.
PROTESTORS: We are hip, we know where it's at, so pick up the scriptures and drop the spat!

PROTESTOR #1: What do we want?
PROTESTORS: To stop the spats!
PROTESTOR #1: When do we want it?
PROTESTORS: Yes!

PROTESTOR #1: (To JONES.) We demand you end this brazen worshipping of false idols immediately! It is an abomination and must be stopped. So you think your numbers are strong? Well, we are great in number, too, and what's more, we have a greater power in our corner. (Pointing up.) And with that power on our side, we are ready to fight whatever horrors you and your coven may produce. We're ready to match you...spit for spat!

PROTESTORS spit on the ground as one and slowly close in on JONES. Suddenly, from the other side, a group of ZEALOTS enters, holding signs as well. They all wear spats.

ZEALOTS: Roses are red, violets are blue, we like spats...they're great!
PROTESTOR #1: Ha! We might have known you would summon your minions!
ZEALOT #1: For millennia, you have committed every atrocity imaginable and justified it by what you call good...now we have a true symbol of hope and brotherhood! Revolution!
ZEALOTS: Revolution!
PROTESTOR #1: Blasphemy! You will pay for your insolence, starting with he who leads you!

PROTESTORS close in on JONES again.

ZEALOTS: Get away from the wise one! He is the light of the world to come!
All are suddenly engaged in mortal combat with their signs. JONES watches from his chair, dumbfounded. They chase each other offstage, revealing THE GIRL, standing quietly alone. She steps forward, crosses her arms and taps her foot.

THE GIRL: Wow. A huge mess. And you in the middle of it. Why does this seem so familiar? Nothing left for me to do, I guess, but clean it up like always...but not this time. (JONES knits his brow.) No! Don't speak! Through all of this, I've kept silent, the woman behind the man, while you found your voice and rose to the top. And what do I get in return? Just a blank stare, the one on your face right now...like you've never laid eyes on me before in your life! (JONES looks out to the audience.) Well, now it's time for you to listen. (Bursting into tears.) I can't do it anymore. I'm sorry, I can't. (JONES watches from the chair.) Please, don't get up. I don't want you near me, to feel your touch. It'll only make it harder to leave. (Coming closer.) Just let me remember us as we once were...before the first...“lovers’ spat,” as it were. When you were just a man with a vision, before all the glitz and glitter clouded a dream and turned it into a nightmare— (Putting her finger to JONES's lips.) No! Don't deny it...we both know it’s true...however much it might hurt to admit it. Somewhere in the middle of your meteoric rise...we fell apart. But we'll always have the memories, won't we? Won't we, my darling? (Beat. With THE GIRL'S finger still on his lips, JONES nods slowly. THE GIRL smiles, wistfully.) That's all I needed to hear.

She begins to exit slowly, but bursts into tears about halfway and runs out of the room. Beat. JONES turns back and picks up his pencil. He turns sharply and waits. Long pause. JONES is finally satisfied and begins to bring the pencil down when the sound of a large group approaching is heard, getting closer. JONES puts the pencil down and covers his face with his hands as a large rally consisting of everyone in the play enters and pulses around him.
POLITICIAN: Friends, we are here to turn the page on a new chapter in history. A day that from this point forward shall be known as “Spat-urday.” That so many prominent figures are in attendance should only serve as proof of the nobility of the spat and what it represents.

Beside POLITICIAN, ACTRESS steps forward, holding up a pair of spats.

ACTRESS: I support spats...go see my new movie!

ACTRESS steps back and SPORTS STAR steps forward, bat over one shoulder and a pair of spats in his other hand.

SPORTS STAR: I support sports—er, spats...go buy my new energy drink!

SPORTS STAR steps back, and POLITICIAN steps forward.

POLITICIAN: I support spats...and I wouldn't mind those last minute votes in my bid for office. (POLITICIAN grins and winks winningly. The crowd roars with approval.) Now, with this final countdown, let us usher in a new era of peace and understanding. Is everyone ready?

All but JONES don spats as a timer descends and begins a countdown.

ALL BUT JONES: 3...2...1...

All jump up in their spats. They cheer and check out their neighbors’ spats as confetti and balloons descend on the scene and streamers burst in all directions, covering the protest signs which still litter the floor.
POLITICIAN: Congratulations! Congratulations, my friends...brothers and sisters...the new age has begun. And just in time for the new moon! Come, we haven't long to get to the Spat Spot. Did everyone come prepared? (All pull out their maps.) We mustn't delay. History waits for no man!

They trample the various debris and decorations that have accrued underfoot in their hurry to exit. JONES is alone onstage. Beat. JONES stands. Comes around the desk. Bends down. Removes one spat, then the other. Tosses them in the wastebasket. He sits down at his desk, staring out.

BOSS MAN: Jones! (BOSS MAN enters. He is now wearing spats.) What is the meaning of this? (Pause. JONES waits.) I'm a patient man, Jones. A fair, equitable, tolerant man, but this truly is the absolute limit! Stand up. (JONES stands.) Move to your right. (JONES moves out from behind the desk.) Where, may I ask, ARE they? (BOSS MAN points furiously at JONES'S feet. He is not wearing spats.) In all my years with this company, I have never seen such blatant disregard for...protocol isn't even the word. For decency. Your coworkers, your friends, everyone you know, basking in the sheer oneness of the occasion, and yet you think this somehow doesn't apply to you? Where is your sense of compassion? Of community? Of...of...of basic connection to humanity? (JONES is silent.) No, don't bother answering. I've heard enough of your excuses. Every fiber of my being is humming to thrash you on the spot! (Pause.) However, I'm late to get to the Spat Spot. The new moon's almost up—but when I get back... (BOSS MAN pulls out his map and starts off in one direction, mumbling. He slows to a halt, flips the map around, and heads off the other way.) Now, what was that pass phrase? “The cow sticks its tail up at noon?” “The pig draws its line in the sand at dawn?” “The platypus shoves its bill inside..."
BOSS MAN exits. JONES is alone. He brushes the confetti off his desk. Pulls a strand of tinsel out of his hair. Looks left, then right. Looks down at the pencil. JONES extends his hand, and frowning slightly, picks the pencil up. Slowly, he lowers it. When the pencil is mere inches away, he stops. Takes one last urgent look around. Inhales sharply and brings it down. Beat. Long exhalation as JONES simply holds the pencil in place. He closes his eyes and raises his head, opens them and looks out at the audience. JONES smiles brilliantly. He looks back down at the sheet of paper and squares his shoulders. Slowly at first, then quicker and quicker, he begins to work.

THE END