

WORK SUCKS

TEN MINUTE PLAY

By **Adrienne Dawes**

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SYNOPSIS: *Work Sucks* is about the tragic demise of America's middle management. Lost in a labyrinth of cubicles, everyman Brad Braidley, Employee #285 at the nameless American Everycompany, receives a message from a chorus of his colleagues that the company is downsizing. Fearing the 'tide of pink slips' foretold by the oracle of CNN, Brad Braidley begins his journey to confront the all-powerful Zeush and revoke his faith in the mighty culture of capital.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

*(FLEXIBLE CAST OF SEVEN, THREE MEN,
FOUR NON-GENDER SPECIFIC)*

BRAD BRAIDLEY (m)Employee #285 at the All-American
Everycomany and recipient of one pink slip
TYE RESUS (m).....A wise old mail clerk
ZEUSH (m)The All Powerful Dubya
CHORUS3 Chorus Members (m or f) and 1 Chorus
Leader (m or f)

PRODUCTION NOTES

Work Sucks requires seven cast members and is set in a modern-day office divided by cubicles.

Production History:

Work Sucks premiered in End Times Productions' Vignettes from the Apocalypse in February 2008 where it was named BEST COMEDY.

AT RISE:

Lights rise on a large office grimly divided with gray cubicles. The office is bustling with people on the phone. Underneath the ringing, buzzing, beeping of machines is the low mechanical drone of computers. Suddenly, the noise breaks into silence as the CHORUS enters. The CHORUS, made of four businessmen and women, armed with briefcases and expandable manila folders, march down the sharp corridors of the cubicles in unison. They make their way to a cubicle DSL where BRAD BRAIDLEY sits behind a huge stack of file folders, clutching his paperweight protectively.

BRAD BRAIDLEY: *(Meekly.)* Can . . . can I help you guys?

CHORUS: *(In monotone chant.)* Are you the Brad Braidley, occupant of cubicle 1-4, employee number 285, parking lot space 3F?

BRAD BRAIDLEY: Yes . . . ?

LEADER: We bring a message of great importance from powers that be -

CHORUS: - from the BOARD MEETING!!!

LEADER: You might want to sit down.

CHORUS: This is just a suggestion!

BRAD hesitantly sits down in his chair.

LEADER: What we have to impart on you - Brad Allen Braidley, Jr, exiled from the house of Braidley in Charlotte, NC, born 32 zodiacs ago under a blue moon to mother Henrietta, father Bradley Sr., most distinguished alumni of Lots of Tots preschool, Preston Elementary, Fulmore Junior High, Camp Kickaround for three consecutive summers, Center City High School, and ECU. Your conquest overseas of foreign markets in Japan and Germany in 1998 brought us all wealth and prosperity!

CHORUS: Praise. Praise.

LEADER: We thank you Brad Braidley, married to Cheryl Lynn Braidley, née Witherson, father to sons Chip and Bobby Braidley, for these treasures of stock and an expanded client base.

CHORUS: Praise. Praise.

LEADER: We now bring news from the -

CHORUS: BOARD MEETING!

LEADER: A tale most grievous do we tell. Powers above and beyond have declared that this company must -

CHORUS: DOWN-SIZE. Investors are removed from the city, cowering from such meager profit projections.

LEADER: Zeush, on his white throne of luxury, has hoarded the fruits of the economy and now feasts upon the souls of middle management -

BRAD BRAIDLEY: (*Rising from his seat.*) It cannot be so!

CHORUS: Yes, yes, we fear it, Brad Braidley, Jr., voted Employee of the Month July 2001. The oracle of CNN has foretold our demise!

BRAD BRAIDLEY: Oh, curséd greed! Oh, with what a slovenly appetite does Zeush feed! What is to become of Larry Berkowitz in Accounts Payable? And young Ingrid O'Reilly in Tech Support?

LEADER: We fear the tide of pink slips will drown this place. It seems naught but misfortune will trickle down upon us, humble servants to the machine. We are taxed for the war abroad, we are taxed for our terror.

CHORUS: May the might of your résumé and college degree bring you some happiness, blessings to your wife and children. Farewell Brad Braidley, social security number 245-44-0921.

Exeunt Chorus. BRAD sits back down, bewildered.

BRAD BRAIDLEY: What is to become of me, common man of common dreams? I worshipped at the altar of meritocracy and this is reward for my prayers? We have all slaved away the years of our youth to send our children to private colleges, we have all given proper sacrifice so that our wives may volunteer professionally, so that we may buy a minivan AND a sports caravan! Curséd is this land! Curséd is the God that would make us suffer such a grievous plight! Have we not suffered enough pain? If I could but strip the powers from above and install a new

freedom in the hearts of man, oh that I would!

TYE RESUS, a feeble old man, hobbles onstage with a mail cart, dispensing mail to the various cubicles. He stops at BRAD's cubicle and hands him a pink letter-sized envelope.

TYE RESUS: For you, young Bradley Jr, word from the main office.

BRAD looks the envelope over carefully in his hands.

BRAD BRAIDLEY: Oh, I do fear this is the dreaded message from Human Resources. Tell me, wise mail clerk, how is it that one may give and give one's life away to the promise of a dream and in an instant have it disappear like vapor between one's fingers?

TYE leans wearily on his mail cart.

TYE RESUS: Before your time, before man was codependent on machinery to hold the structure of his society, there was the earth and the hand. The alliance between man and earth provided bountiful harvests for generations and generations. There was a sort of reciprocal respect betwixt earth and man - - unlike any you have ever seen - - unlike any I will ever see again. I once worked for the earth, taking up my ancestor's farm, confident in my work and with the satisfaction of the constant return of crops with the seasons. Then was the earth poisoned of its richness from the pollution of machine. I lost my family's lands ere I was of age to start mine own family. Thus I did labor for the factories at low wage for years, illiterate in the language of machines - and when my hands did lose ability to arthritis, my lungs to the toxic breath of fumes, I was thus removed from my homeland to seek work here. Now I do labor here, dispensing such royal memos and sacred paychecks at no greater wage, no retirement foreseen in my future. There is no return in this exchange!

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I look to you, young Brad Braidley, educated in the world of machine and yet a heart so strong to revenge the injustices brought upon us servants. I must now away to the coffee machine, for there is but a few beans left of that Starbucks delicacy. I find peace in the small things, though my soul is weary.

Exeunt TYE RESUS with his mail cart.

BRAD BRAIDLEY: Good mail clerk, I will not let his suffering go unnoticed. No longer will I endure such sickening disregard for the human spirit!

BRAD packs up his belongings in a small carton, and clutching his pink envelope, he furiously exits. The CHORUS reenters and does a ritualistic song/dance to a medley of work-related songs. BRAD reenters in full suburban warrior regalia. The CHORUS begins to chant and dance loudly around him.

BRAD BRAIDLEY: I come before the gods to appeal this pink slip of doom!

CHORUS: Praises to the valiant hero Brad Braidley, sometime golfer and football enthusiast!!!

BRAD BRAIDLEY: I rally you all here today and ask who among you have two weeks paid vacation?

CHORUS: None here! None here!

BRAD BRAIDLEY: How many of you have received a promotion for leadership, wages increased?

CHORUS: Not !! Not !!

BRAD BRAIDLEY: Is this a house that fosters community with company picnics? Is there any incentive to continue to slave away under the authorities of the Main Office governed by an unfit God?!

CHORUS: None seen! None seen!

BRAD BRAIDLEY: And yet they seek to cast us out of our sacred cubicles, my fellow colleagues. We are expendable, slaves to the all-powerful Zeush who governs us all!

CHORUS: Work sucks! Work sucks!

BRAD BRAIDLEY: As does a country that would do us shame, that would inconvenience its citizens for the whims of an impulsive, immature God. I am formally revoking my faith in a system sick with corruption.

CHORUS: To Canada! To Canada!

BRAD BRAIDLEY: The great migration shall begin, for it is a decree from the people by the people. Let us leave behind forever this cursed place!

Lights shift and a billowing cloud of smoke fills the stage. The CHORUS hushes and drops to the ground. BRAD stays standing, defiantly. ZEUSH appears in a golden business suit draped on his body like a toga. With a monkey-ish smile, he flutters above or around the office with a dumb grin.

ZEUSH: *(Southern accent.)* It is I, Zeush! Revoke not your faith in the mighty culture of capital! For might is always right, right is always might!

BRAD BRAIDLEY: I fear you not Zeush - sender of pink envelopes!

He holds out his pink envelope furiously.

ZEUSH: I am the Dubya! Bow down before me! I have said, and I've said this consistently, that I am the chosen one - you mortals must abide by them laws that I say you have to abide by. You say Canada? I say Canada is ripe for invasion, and if you are to revoke your citizenship, there will be no protection from disease and strife! The golden arches will only protect thee as long as thou submit!

BRAD BRAIDLEY: The lies you've told us! You have cost us our livelihood! I hold you accountable for our grief!

ZEUSH: I - - uh - - cannot, will not, am not, aren't not responsible for no unhealthy economy. Or your grief. Turn back!

BRAD BRAIDLEY: For what? A coveted position at Barnes and Nobles? That is the work for newly graduated liberal arts students, not businessmen. Or would you rather us submit to ground beef torture in food service? Such work is only for colored single mothers and immigrants! I want the safety and security of the past. I want my MBA to mean something, god dammit!

ZEUSH quakes and shakes angrily.

ZEUSH: You are seriously making mistakes beyond belief to dishonor me!

BRAD BRAIDLEY: I only want you to know the faces of the people you've betrayed before we leave you forever!

ZEUSH: Axis of Evil! Code Red! Code Red! He's got uh - a bomb!!!

The CHORUS bolts out of the office, screaming.

BRAD BRAIDLEY: I have no weapon but my words. I seek only the truth, the admittance of your fault for our sorrow . . .

Suddenly two armed GUARDS rush in and tackle BRAD BRAIDLEY to the ground. They drag him kicking and screaming off stage. ZEUSH gives a satisfied smile and begins to pick his nose. The CHORUS somberly reenters.

LEADER: Alas, our fear did get the best of us.

CHORUS: Alack this condition to feed the terror rather than stand up for our beliefs. Brad Braidley was a good man - - it was not right for them to publicly broadcast his death!

LEADER: Better stoned to death on FOX TV, than trek the barren wilderness of Canada, unprotected from the coughing disease of the Orient, political refugees, and a vast population that speaks French, eh?

The CHORUS shudders.

CHORUS: We shall remain here to share the story of good Brad Braidley, under the protection of those glorious golden arches most sacred. Now - make copies. File. Facsimile. Oh holy email.

The CHORUS disperses into the office cubicles.

THE END

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