

CUBISM

A 10-Minute Play

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CHARACTERS

Yen	Cubicle worker, 28, American born son of Taiwanese parents, oppressed by the “corporate caste”
Brie	Cubicle worker, 25, officious prig, mother of a 16-month-old girl
Fred	Cubicle worker, 57, native son of Wyoming, has an ailing wife, basically defeated
Nate	Computer tech, 39, Hawaiian-shirt-wearing cowboy, loose cannon

SETTING

A cubicle farm.
Time is irrelevant.

CUBISM

Three cubicles in a row. The walls of the cubicles are simple frames set at odd angles to suggest a cubist rendering. Ideally, the frames are movable. Each cubicle contains a desk, chair, and computer. Yen is in the center cubicle. Brie and Fred on either side. All characters are free to roam their cubicles like caged animals, testing the boundaries and adjusting the walls into new, yet still confining geometries. Yen occasionally stands on his chair and desk.

YEN

(To audience.) From every point in a cubicle you can see every other point, at every other time, from the beginning of times to the end. Every quantum particle contains every other particle, as well as the black matter and black energy between. *(Thinks.)* There's got to be way out.

BRIE

(Wearing a headset. Officious.) Hello, this is the voice mail of Brie Johnson. You may press star to skip this message.

YEN

Every morning of every day for all eternity, as well as never, Brie Johnson claims that she is her own voice mail, not herself recording a message.

FRED

(Standing. Into phone.) Hi, it's me. I'm about to leave work.

YEN

Every afternoon of every day for all eternity, as well as never, Fred Muñoz calls his wife. His wife is not well and we can only infer that her defining modality is whining. She doesn't answer the phone right away. When she hears his voice, she answers ... sometimes.

FRED

I'm 'onna take a ride down to Whole Foods, then go over to Home Depot to get a new ... *(Sigh.)* Hi.

YEN

Today she answers. He starts over when she does.

FRED

I'm about to leave work.

BRIE

I'm either on the phone or away from my desk. I'm in the office all day today; however, I'll be stepping out for lunch at noon.

FRED

I'm 'onna take a ride down to Whole Foods, then go over to Home Depot to get a new ... *(Sigh.)* I'm sure it will be fine tomorrow. *(Sigh.)* I doubt it. *(Sigh.)* I'll be home in a little while. *(Sing-song.)* Love you.

YEN

No matter how disgusted or frustrated he is, he ends every conversation with ...

FRED

Love you.

BRIE

Please leave a detailed message including your name, phone number, e-mail address, and the reason for your call.

YEN

(Climbs his desk.) My whole life as a cube worker has been nothing more than a continuous struggle against "reaction" and the death of the human spirit. In this cubicle where I'm working, which I shall call Cubica, and in cubicles around the globe, I clearly express my abhorrence of the corporate caste which has sunk the work force in an ocean of pain and death! *(Pause.)* Except ... the only pain and the only death we know comes from outside.

NATE

(Offstage.) Yee-haw! Git along, little doggies!

YEN

That's Nate, the I.T. guy. He doesn't have a cubicle. I left him a voice mail about my computer.

Yen climbs down. Nate enters.

NATE

(To Yen.) What seems to be the problem here, Sky Captain? What's all this whining and "oh, woe is me" bull pucky? What in *they hail* is -- Woah! Hold on there, pardner. What's this? What's this? B.S.O.D.!?

YEN

B.S.O.D.?

NATE

Blue screen of death, aka bluescreen, aka stop error! Man, what've you been up to!

YEN

Well, see, that wasn't the original problem. This blue screen thing only happened after ...

NATE

After what?

YEN

After I beat on the keyboard ... repeatedly.

NATE

Repeatedly? (*Thinks.*) Both hands or just one?

YEN

Both. But I only reverted to beating on the keyboard because ... well ...

NATE

Yes?

YEN

Because my foot hurt so badly.

NATE

And how, do tell, did your foot come to hurt?

YEN

By kicking the computer.

NATE

Ah! (*He laughs uncontrollably. His laugh should be hilarious sounding.*) You kicked the computer, which made your foot hurt so bad, you just had to slam on the keyboard with both hands, which caused the B.S.O.D.?

YEN

Right.

NATE

(*Stops laughing. Grimly.*) I have just one question. Why'd you kick the computer?

YEN

Well, see, um ... my wife ... she wanted to do something special for our fifth wedding anniversary. And so she thought that maybe a cruise might be nice. To the Caribbean. *(Nate waits.)* And so ... I searched the Internet.

NATE

(Horrified, pats both ears with his hands.) Ah! I don't want to hear it! La la la la la ...

YEN

And so I was surfing and ... I went to this site.

NATE

No, no, no ... not a site. You didn't go to a site.

YEN

I did.

NATE

A site? *(Yen nods.)* Oh, and don't tell me, pop-ups? *(Yen nods.)* All over the screen? *(Yen nods.)* And then you get this official looking pop-up in the lower right corner of the screen saying "your system may be seriously infected" blah blah blah? *(Yen nods.)* And you? *(Yen nods.)* No, you? *(Yen nods.)* You didn't! You?

YEN

I clicked.

NATE

Ah! *(He laughs maniacally.)* Oh my god you're such an idiot! You clicked? *(Still laughing.)* Okay, I get the picture: wife, cruise, site, pop-ups, click, kick, slam, B.S.O.D.!

YEN

In a nutshell. *(Waits while Nate laughs himself out.)* Anything you can do?

Nate crawls under the desk and detaches the cables connected to the computer.

NATE

Nuke and pave!

YEN

Nuke? What? Nuke and pave? What's that? What are you doing?

Nate stands and tucks the computer under his arm.

NATE

I'll bring a loaner. It won't have all your stuff on it, all your fancy programs, all your downloads which I've asked you not to download.

Nate starts to go.

YEN

Hey, Nate. Are there any openings over there in I.T.?

NATE

(Suspicious.) Maybe. Why?

YEN

I don't know. It'd be kind of cool to work with you guys. You know, get out of this rat hole, wander free.

NATE

(Indicating the computer.) Need I remind you?

Nate exits.

BRIE

Hello, this is the boice vail ... voice ... mail. *(Presses buttons.)* Hello, this is the voice mail of Brie Johnson. You may praise scar ... press ... star. *(Presses buttons.)* Hello, this is the voice mail of --

YEN

(Into his phone.) Hello, this is the voice mail of Sir Isaac Newton. You may press star to skip this message. *(Brie listens, stands, glares at Yen.)* I'm either sitting under an apple tree or playing with my chemistry set. If you are calling in regard to a basic law of physics ... *(Notices Brie glaring.)* What?

BRIE

That's not funny.

YEN

Says who?

BRIE

What's your problem?

YEN

Am I speaking to Brie now or her voice mail?

BRIE

What are you talking about?

YEN

Okay, why are you so officious? Why can't you just leave a normal message on your machine? Like, Hi, this is Brie. Please leave a message.

BRIE

That wouldn't sound professional.

YEN

Why do you have to sound *so* professional? So corporate? Why can't you sound human?

BRIE

You don't know what it's like being a woman in the corporate environment. As a male, *and an Asian-American*, everything in business comes easy to you. But if you're a woman, a *blonde* woman, and pretty, everybody thinks you don't have a brain in your head.

YEN

Wait, wait, wait, wait. You think you're pretty?

BRIE

What do you mean, You think you're pretty? You think I'm not pretty?

YEN

I don't feel comfortable talking about this.

BRIE

Hey, you opened this can of worms, now you walk through it!

YEN

That's a mixed metaphor.

BRIE

You think I'm not pretty?

YEN

I think HR showed us a video tape about this.

BRIE

About what? Insulting your coworkers with something that's totally insulting and not even true?

YEN

You're not ugly.

BRIE

Not ugly!?! Not ugly!?! Okay, I may be fat ... because it's hard to have a child and not put on a few pounds ... but I wouldn't trade motherhood in for anything. We have our issues, Scintilla and me ...

YEN

Issues? Isn't your daughter just a year and a half old?

BRIE

Sixteen months!

Nate enters carrying a loaner computer.

NATE

(Yowling like a cat.) Yeeeeeeow! Catfight goin' on. You two play nice now. What seems to be the problem here?

BRIE

This guy's a jerk.

She sits and works at her computer. Through the following dialog, Nate installs and boots the loaner computer.

YEN

So, Nate. How's things?

NATE

Great. Great. Things are great.

YEN

How's your son?

NATE

Ah! The saga continues.

YEN

Yeah. You said. Failure to launch?

NATE

Kid's nineteen years old. He won't get a job. Dropped out of community college. *(Mocking.)* "It's too hard." "The teachers are all jerks." Yeah, right. Smokes pot in his bedroom. So I pulled the plug.

YEN

Pulled the plug?

NATE

Canceled cable *and* broadband. He launched all right.

YEN

Couldn't take it.

NATE

Moved to his mom's.

YEN

Insane, right?

NATE

Druggie.

YEN

That's why you divorced.

Nate is done booting the computer. He stands.

NATE

What was I gonna do? (*Pause.*) Limited permissions on the loaner. Sorry, dude. You brought it on yourself.

YEN

Hey, Nate, I'm serious about that position in I.T. I'd love to --

Nate punches Yen's arm gently to shut him up.

NATE

I'll be back with your computer in a couple of days.

He exits.

YEN

(*To audience.*) But ... he won't be back in a couple of days. The e-mail from the CEO came a week after Nate took my computer. (*Brie and Fred read along on their monitors.*) "As some of you know ..." None of us knew. "One of our own, Nate Cash, has suffered a terrible tragedy. Last week he lost his son, Trane Greenburg-Cash. I have knowledge that the financial arrangements for his son's funeral have been particularly challenging for Nate. So, if you feel like it, you may contribute to a fund that the company has established for this purpose."

All three stand and look at each other. In a daze, they move the angles of their walls. Fred and Brie switch cubicles.

YEN

Nate's son, Trane Greenburg-Cash, had overdosed in his mother's home, on his mother's heroin. Nate returned to work just two weeks later.

Nate enters carrying Yen's computer. Nate is not wearing a Hawaiian shirt and has lost all his vitality.

NATE

Hey. Got your computer.

During the following dialog, Nate disconnects one computer and installs the other.

YEN

Sorry ... about ... getting that virus. It won't happen again. I'll be more careful.

NATE

You know, being more careful doesn't work.

YEN

Doesn't?

NATE

You can be more and more careful from here to Y3K, and you'll always be several hundred steps behind the heinous activities of ... them.

YEN

Them?

NATE

The hooligans. The attackers. They're smarter than you are, than I am. They're more "proactive." They take something benign, say like Google, and they figure out how to use it to do their heinous hooligan activities. So you can be as careful as you want, you can exercise care, in every keystroke, and what's gonna happen is what's gonna happen. Because it's out of your control.

Nate is finished installing the computer. He stands.

You have all your permissions. There are no restrictions.

YEN

I don't mind restrictions.

NATE

There are none.

YEN

I don't mind though. I think ...

NATE

You know what? I don't care what you think.

First Brie and then Fred stand and watch.

YEN

Nate, come on.

NATE

No, you little worker bees make me sick. You think you know shit, and really you know *jack* shit.

YEN

I'm sorry about the virus.

NATE

Yeah.

YEN

And about your son.

Nate is stung. He flips off Yen with both hands.

NATE

Fuck you!

YEN

Me? Why me? I like you, Nate. You're out there. I really ... feel heartbroken over this.

NATE

That's your problem!

YEN

Why are you acting like this to me? I contributed to the funeral fund.

NATE

(In his face.) You're several hundred steps behind.

YEN

What? Behind ... What does that mean? Behind the heinous attackers? (*Nate walks away.*) Wait. (*Nate stops.*) Take me with you.

NATE

You're not tied down.

Nate exits.

YEN

But I am. We all are.

Yen and Fred sit. Brie picks up the phone. Fred and Brie have switched personas.

FRED

Hello, this is the voice mail of Brie Johnson. You may press star to skip this message.

BRIE

Hi. I'm about to leave work.

Yen types at his computer. He doesn't like what he sees on the screen and taps the keys harder and harder.

FRED

I'm either on the phone or away from my desk.

BRIE

I'm 'onna take a ride over to Whole Foods.

FRED

I'm in the office all day today; however ...

BRIE

I'll be home ... (*Sigh.*) Hi.

Yen slams both hands on the keyboard. Blackout.

End of Play