

# *Kings, Peasants, CEO's and Drones*

By Matthew Burkholder

SCENE: A conference room.

CAST IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE:

John

Keith

George

Olivia

Robert Kenneth

*John and Keith enter followed shortly by George. All three are business men in well cut suits. John is by far the more aggressive of the trio.*

JOHN: Do you know what this is about?

KEITH: No, I haven't a clue. George?

GEORGE: Zip. I just had a message from my secretary telling me to be in the conference room at ten fifteen for a meeting with the president.

JOHN: Well he must know that we're busy men, we can't just drop everything at his beck and call. I had to rearrange my entire day around this.

GEORGE: He's the president, you gotta give him some leeway.

JOHN: I've never met him, have you?

GEORGE: Are you kidding? I've never even heard his voice.

KEITH: Well, this is weird. Can I just say this is weird? This is weird, I don't like it one bit. It's weird.

*Olivia enters. She is a lovely woman.*

JOHN: Yes Olivia?

OLIVIA: I'm here for the meeting.

JOHN: You are?

OLIVIA: Yes. I got a memo telling me to be in the conference room at ten fifteen for a meeting. What is it about?

JOHN: Well we don't really know. Now why would he want the Vice Presidents of the company and the receptionist?

OLIVIA: He who?

KEITH: The President.

OLIVIA: Bobby?

*John, George, and Keith all look at her dumbfounded for a moment. She stammers to correct her informality.*

OLIVIA: Bob... Robert... Mr. Kenneth?

KEITH: Bobby?

OLIVIA: I'm sorry?

KEITH: Um, you said "Bobby." You called our president, Robert Kenneth, multi billionaire and controlling stockholder in five companies including our own "Bobby."

OLIVIA: Slip of the tongue.

JOHN: You know Mr. Kenneth?

OLIVIA: In a way.

JOHN: In what "way" do you know him?

OLIVIA: Oh get your mind out of the gutter. You know, you're going to get a sexual harassment suit filed against you one of these days.

JOHN: All I'm saying is, well, don't you find it odd that we, the vice presidents have never so much as laid eyes on Mr. Kenneth whereas you, the receptionist, are calling him Bobby?

OLIVIA: You might be surprised at what a receptionist knows about what goes on around here John.

JOHN: What time is it?

KEITH: Ten ten.

JOHN: Five more minutes. Well, that gives us just enough time for you to tell us how you know Mr. Kenneth and to dispel my assumptions.

OLIVIA: He's a friend of the family.

GEORGE: John, lay off.

JOHN: Well, I'm just wondering who else might be showing up for this meeting? Any other friends of the family that I should know

about? Is this going to turn into a family reunion? Robert Kenneth, this is your life!

GEORGE: He asked her to come, that's good enough for me.

KEITH: Yeah, me too. Oh, donuts!

JOHN: Fine, I'm out voted. *(beat)* I just don't know where you fit into this equation. I don't like mysteries. They bother me. They get under my skin and scratch and scratch. So, what have we got here? Keith, you graduated from Harvard, were hired here right out of college as an officer and within two years were promoted to Vice President. Very impressive, but not hard to believe since you're such a damn neurotic "yes" man. George. George, you're my friend and you do a damn good job. Under your leadership people out perform what they normally do. That's a great asset. Me, the only one of us with the killer instinct, and the receptionist, the mystery, the enigma. I want to know what the fuck is going on. Is that a bad thing? Is that a bad trait Keith? Is it? Go on, agree with me, I know you want to. It's in your nature. You always agree.

KEITH: It's weird, I'll give you that.

JOHN: That's my man. Look Olivia, I'll lay off the whole relationship innuendo, we all know you have better taste than to fool around behind your husband's back with an old man, rich though he is, but I think we can all agree that we'd like to know what to expect from the old man. He... is an older man, right?

OLIVIA: He's in his sixties somewhere.

JOHN: Sixties. Well, that means a lot these days, but he may be planning to retire, looking for someone to take over. He might be looking for his heir. That would explain the three of us, but you... you're just gonna keep me in the dark aren't you?

OLIVIA: John, why don't you sit down? Donut?

JOHN: You know what this is all about don't you?

OLIVIA: No, I don't.

JOHN: She's lying. She knows.

GEORGE: John, for the last time, would you lay off and sit down?

*John sits at the conference table and the four of them sit in silence for what seems like just a little too long. Keith sits and nibbles on a donut. John sits glaring at Olivia who is trying to ignore him. George is writing or doodling, we can't really tell, on a legal pad. A few beats pass during which John has been*

*getting more and more frustrated at Olivia who is doing absolutely nothing to antagonize him. Finally unable to take it anymore he stands and points an accusatory finger at her.*

JOHN: She knows.

OLIVIA: George would you like a cup of coffee?

GEORGE: Sure.

OLIVIA: Keith?

KEITH: If it isn't too much trouble.

*Olivia turns to John*

JOHN: No. Thank you.

OLIVIA: I'll be right back.

*She exits*

JOHN: You two make me sick.

GEORGE: Look John, you aren't making this any easier on any of us. If she's a friend of his, just take it at that. She's a friend of his.

JOHN: Oh, she's a friend. Well, I don't know about you, but I generally don't get my friends involved in my work. Maybe I should bring my buddy Darren from high school in to the next marketing meeting? How bout that? How bout we all just have a bring your fucking friend to work day? How bout that? We'll sit around drinking beers and talking sports all day and have a grand ol' time. Sure. What do you think Keith? Who you gonna agree with? You know that means you would have to disagree with one of us. What is your opinion on this matter? Should we have a bring a friend to work day? Should we?

KEITH: I think I'll go help Olivia with the coffee.

JOHN: No you don't. Abstaining isn't an option. I don't think Olivia should be in on this meeting unless there's a reason for her to be here that is work related. Would you agree or disagree?

KEITH: I would agree with that.

GEORGE: Don't let him railroad you Keith.

KEITH: Well, now, he has a point. If she's just here because she's a friend, well, the question at hand is really, is that appropriate? John makes a strong point.

GEORGE: And maybe she is here for a reason. That's all I'm saying. The fact that we don't know, the fact that she doesn't know doesn't make her immediately dismissible and frankly, Mr. Kenneth does one hell of a good job running this company, so if he wants her here, then I'm going to go under the assumption that he knows what he's doing. Am I right.

KEITH: Well...

JOHN: Go on, say it. I know you want to.

KEITH: He's got a point. What can I do, he's got a point! And I don't always agree!

JOHN: Bull shit.

KEITH: I've disagreed with my staff a lot. You just aren't there every time I disagree. You just happen to be around when I agree.

JOHN: With your staff? Perhaps you don't understand what I mean when I say you are a yes man. A yes man is someone who agrees with his superiors. How you deal with your staff is a whole other topic. You're supposed to be telling them what to do and when they do something wrong you're supposed to tell them they fucked up, if you didn't, then I'd be really worried. Then I'd question whether or not the president had his head screwed on at all, which I kind of doubt right now anyway.

KEITH: Do you have any idea how much I hate you right now?

JOHN: Good. At least that shows a shred of individuality.

KEITH: You are a son of a bitch.

JOHN: Do you want to take this outside?

GEORGE: John, shut up.

JOHN: George, I like you. This has nothing to do with you. I disagree with you, but I at least respect you.

GEORGE: If you respect me, then shut up.

JOHN: You aren't actually defending this spineless weasel?

GEORGE: I'm telling you to shut up. Shut up.

JOHN: Fine. Fine.

GEORGE: Keith, what time is it?

KEITH: One more minute.

JOHN: Let's get this over with.

*Olivia enters with a tray of three coffees and a tea.*

OLIVIA: George, Keith.

GEORGE: Thanks Olivia.

KEITH: Thanks.

JOHN:: I said I didn't want one. Besides, it's tea. I hate tea. You know I hate tea.

OLIVIA: It's for Robert.

JOHN: She knows what he drinks?

GEORGE: John. Promise me.

*A beat passes.*

KEITH: Why don't either of you wear watches?

JOHN: I'm gonna kill him!

*John rushes Keith who scrambles out of the way and runs around the table to hide behind George. Olivia climbs up on the table to avoid the fracas. John chases after Keith. George punches John in the face laying him flat on his back.*

GEORGE: OW, fuck! Look what you made me do! Ow.

KEITH: Is he dead?

OLIVIA: Don't be silly. Boy, you popped him a good one.

KEITH: He looks dead.

GEORGE: He's not dead! He's not dead is he?

OLIVIA: John doesn't die so easy. He's like a vampire, you need to stab him in the heart with a wooden stake or something.

GEORGE: Oh, hell. John. John. Wake up John. John. John, come on.

*George shakes John gently.*

OLIVIA: Let me.

*Olivia slaps him.*

GEORGE: Easy!

OLIVIA: I'm not going to do any more damage than you've already done.

KEITH: He's not bleeding is he? I can't take blood.

GEORGE: Just a little.

KEITH: Oh boy.

*Keith goes over to a chair and puts his head between his legs and begins breathing deeply.*

GEORGE: John. John, wake up John.

*John moans.*

OLIVIA: He'll be here any minute. Keith, what are you doing?

KEITH: If I don't keep my head down I'll pass out. I can't stand violence, it makes me nauseous. Do you want me to pass out?

GEORGE: He'll fire me. He'll fire me is what he'll do. That's what I'd do.

OLIVIA: I'll explain to him, don't worry.

GEORGE: John will sue me. I can promise you that. He loves suing people.

OLIVIA: No, he won't.

GEORGE: He sued that entire chain of convenience stores when he got milk that had expired.

OLIVIA: He's not going to sue you.

GEORGE: He won't!

OLIVIA: George, get a grip, I'm not going to let him sue you. He won't sue you!

GEORGE: He won't.

OLIVIA: Trust me, I'll make sure.

GEORGE: What do you know?

OLIVIA: Enough to know he won't sue you.

GEORGE: You do know something, don't you? About Mr. Kenneth.

OLIVIA: A little.

KEITH: You mean, John was right?

OLIVIA: I know a little bit, not much, but a little.

*John sits up pointing a finger at Olivia.*

JOHN: I knew it.

GEORGE: Damn! John, are you all right?

JOHN: I'll heal. And you're right, I'll see you in court. You got a mean right hook George.

*The door opens and Robert Kenneth enters. He is a very distinguished older gentleman. He enters the conference room and they all turn to look.*

ROBERT: John, George, Keith, thank you for taking your some time out of your busy schedules. Olivia, how are you? I spoke to your mother last night, she says you don't call. Call your mother.

OLIVIA: Thank you Bob. You look good.

ROBERT: No I don't, but thank you for saying so. Take your seats.

*They all sit.*

ROBERT: Well, here we are. I've called this meeting because I've made a decision that will affect all of you. Now, this isn't a decision that I've come to lightly. Last night I was up well past my bedtime reaching it. After my last triple bypass operation I decided I needed to make some changes in my life. I could let the first couple go by, even the fourth and fifth, but by your seventh open heart surgery, you need to start questioning your lifestyle. Am I right?

KEITH: Absolutely.

*John glares at Keith who cringes.*

ROBERT: Yes, well...it was a wake up call and my wife is sick with worry for me so I'm retiring. I've got a small island country that needs my attention anyway, and it isn't easy to be a king and run three multi billion dollar corporations and two multi million corporations at the same time. I'm retiring as of today and have decided on my replacement. Now before I announce my replacement, I want to thank the three of you for some wonderful work. The

last two quarters have been outstanding and you are all to be commended and I assure you, you will all be commended in the form of bonuses, but of course there is only one Presidency. I'm sure though, that you were wondering where Olivia fit into this. Olivia will be taking over for me as of tomorrow morning.

OLIVIA: Robert!

JOHN: What?

*George and Keith are speechless.*

ROBERT: John, shut up. You're a good vice president, and you work hard, but the thought of you running my company sends chills up my spine. Keith, for all your excellent work you just aren't president material, and George, you just need a few more years to fine tune a few of your skills. Someday you'll make a wonderful president, but Olivia is the only person in this company that I trust. She has as much knowledge as any of the three of you about how this company works, probably has more sense of the big picture than any of you, and the three of you will still be doing the same great job you've been doing all along. She get's the job.

JOHN: Then I quit.

OLIVIA: John!

ROBERT: Not without forfeiting one hell of a lot of money, and if I know you half as well as I think I do, you aren't going to let that go so do me a favor and put a cork in it. You're going to have a heck of a nice shiner there.

OLIVIA: Really, I appreciate what you're saying but...

ROBERT: Well, I've got to get to another company. Got a lot of retiring to do, and I've got a three o'clock tee time. Have a good day. Nice to meet you.

*Robert exits.*

JOHN: You... you... you...you can't be serious.

KEITH: Congratulations Madame president.

OLIVIA: Thank you Keith.

GEORGE: Well. I've got a meeting to get to. I'm assuming this is pretty much hush hush for now?

OLIVIA: I think that might be best, just until I figure out how I'm going to make the transition from receptionist to president.

GEORGE: If I may make a suggestion?

OLIVIA: By all means.

GEORGE: We never saw Mr. Kenneth, who's to say we announce a change at all? You said you learned a lot about the company as receptionist. Keep working at the front desk. We are the only ones who need to know until you come up with a method of making the switch.

OLIVIA: I'll think that one over George. Robert was right, you will make a good president one day.

GEORGE: Watch your back.

*George exits.*

OLIVIA: I will.

KEITH: Well, I better go too.

OLIVIA: Thank you for your support Keith.

KEITH: Of course. My pleasure.

*Keith exits.*

OLIVIA: Well John?

JOHN: I can't believe it.

OLIVIA: Get used to it. Shall I leave you here for a little while?

JOHN: Yeah... I think so.

OLIVIA: Don't worry, you'll get used to being married to a president in no time. Why don't you head home without me tonight. I'll be working late.

JOHN: Yes dear.

*She kisses him and exits.*

The end.