

Breakout

By Tom Moran

The Place: A hotel conference room
The Time: too early on a Wednesday morning

Cast of Characters:

JOEL, 20's-early 30's. Idealistic, dressed in business casual.

RENEE, 50's. Dumpy, irritating middle manager in business casual. Frequently talks in confused analogies, often accompanied by equally confusing hand gestures.

TRACY, 20's. Attractive, earnest, desperate-to-get-hired intern, slightly overdressed.

CLAW, 30's-40's. Large, terrifying, dressed in camo fatigues and, possibly, a bandolier. Talks in a growl.

MR. (MARK) ANDERSON, 40's-50's. Everybody's boss, immaculately coiffed, dressed in nice suit.

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SCENE 1

(JOEL, RENEE, TRACY and CLAW sit in a semicircle in a nondescript hotel conference room. JOEL sneaks quizzical glances at CLAW, who chews on a cigar stub.)

RENEE

Well, I guess I'll start. I'm Renee, and I work in human resources. I'm the one that makes sure you get paid, that the money from that one pail pours into the other bucket and walks (pauses, makes random gesture) to market and all the way home.

TRACY

I'm Tracy, and I'm an intern in Accounting. And working here has been a fantastic learning experience and readied me to further my career!

JOEL

I'm Joel, and I just got hired here in R&D four months ago. I'm really excited about the work the company has been doing and I'm looking forward to being a part of it.

RENEE

Great. (to CLAW) And how about you?

CLAW

I'm Claw. I'm a Marauder with Delta Sector.

RENEE

(RENEE smiles and nods.)

Terrific. Nice to meet you.

JOEL

Wait. You're a what? With who?

CLAW

I'm afraid I'm not at liberty to divulge further information, sir.

JOEL

(gives a confused little salute)

Right.

RENEE

Well, since I'm the senior member here, I'm going to pull rank, (looks at CLAW) so to speak, and jump out on top of this breakout session. The topic Mr. Anderson asked us to do our Yoda mind meld on is employee satisfaction. What can we folks do to make Edumax a better place to rhumba?

TRACY

I'll start. You should hire me on! I'm ready and able to contribute to this company's continuing success. I'm experienced with multiple software packages and work well both in a solo environment and as part of a team.

RENEE

That's nice.

TRACY

(holds up notepad and pen.)

Plus, I'll take notes.

RENEE

That would be great. Well, I think we need to consolidate the R13 form - that's the Employee Independent Travel Overage Request - and the L211 form. That's the Managerial Out-Of-Town Materials Requisition and Transfer, of course. I mean, am I crazy - and I must be, my grandkids tell me that all the time - but it seems they're a (pause and random gesture) teensy bit redundant, don't you think? (Looks at Joel.) They just crawl all over each other like piglets.

JOEL

Uh, right. Absolutely.

TRACY

(scrawls)

Like - piglets.

RENEE

And Mister Claw, how about you?

CLAW

It's just Claw. (pause.) And I don't like the carpeting.

RENEE

Excuse me?

CLAW

The carpeting. I come into the building a lot, and I got mud and other - substances on my boots from things I had to do. Makes a big mess. We oughta just have tile.

JOEL

Huh.

CLAW

Also don't like the color in the halls. Too bright. Hurts my eyes. Something in an olive drab maybe.

RENEE

How about a gunmetal gray?

CLAW

That'd work all right too.

RENEE

Well, thank you, Mist - I mean, thank you, Claw. And you, Joel?

JOEL

(to CLAW)

Mud from where?

CLAW

What?

JOEL

Mud. Where are you going that you're getting muddy?

CLAW

What's your security classification, sir?

JOEL

I don't think I have one.

CLAW

Then we can't have that conversation.

JOEL

Is there a conversation we can have?

CLAW

We just had it.

RENEE

And what about you, Joel? What would you do to put a cherry on this corporate brownie?

JOEL

Oh, um. Well, I'm concerned about our support of charitable giving. Some companies allow you to actually designate a portion of your paycheck to good causes, and I'd like to be able to do that.

CLAW

(snorts, under his breath)

Pussy.

JOEL

Excuse me?

CLAW

I didn't say anything.

(TRACY holds up notebook, where she has transcribed "pussy." She points at it.)

TRACY

He called you this.

JOEL

I know what he called me. What the hell, huh? You could always put part of your paycheck to the Klan or something. Or the NRA.

CLAW

Man, I already do.

RENEE

Well, this has been very constructive so far. What else? Tracy?

TRACY

I think the one thing this company is missing is a young, spirited employee with an agile mind and a can-do attitude. (Pause.) And an espresso cart.

RENEE

Noted. Claw, something else?

CLAW

Bigger parking spots.

RENEE

You can't fit your car in them?

CLAW

The Iron Tiger APC is 16 feet wide, ma'am.

TRACY

(stops taking notes)

APC?

CLAW

Armored Personnel Carrier, ma'am.

(JOEL's expression has grown even more quizzical. CLAW makes a scary face at him. JOEL flinches.)

RENEE

Well, I'll tell you what really twists my carrot, is how they give out offices around here. I've been hustling my time card eight years and I'm still waiting on a place with a window.

(As she speaks, CLAW has removed a large and menacing handgun from his pocket and starts to inspect it. JOEL stares.)

RENEE (cont.)

I mean, Joel, now you have a window, isn't that right? Joel?

JOEL

Sorry, what?

RENEE

A window. Don't you have one?

JOEL

Yeah. I just, um. (to no one in particular) All right, what the hell?

RENEE

What, you don't think I should have a window?

JOEL

No. (Gestures towards CLAW) Why does he have that? (To CLAW) Why do you have that?

CLAW

(looks at JOEL like he's an idiot)

For shooting people.

JOEL

Did I miss something? Edumax makes software for elementary schools.

CLAW

(waves gun menacingly)

Edumax does a lot of things.

JOEL

Like what?!

CLAW

I'm not at liberty to-

JOEL

Of course, not at liberty to say, right. Well, who would be at liberty to (he sees something offstage right) - hold on. (He waves) Excuse me! Mister Anderson!

(MR. ANDERSON enters stage right.)

MR. ANDERSON

Well hello, Joel. Producing robust suggestions to improve employee satisfaction, I hope?

JOEL

Yes, of course, Mr. Anderson. But, I had a question. (gestures at CLAW) Who is this person?

MR. ANDERSON

Oh, I see you've met Claw. He's one of our finest marauders.

JOEL

O-kay. And how does "marauding" figure into our line of K-12 learning products?

MR. ANDERSON

Well, Joel, Edumax is a diversified firm. We have to be in this economy. Teaching kids to read isn't going to pay all the bills. Which is why we also run a side business in international mercenaries.

JOEL

What?

TRACY

I believe mercenaries play a pivotal role in global security, Mr. Anderson, and I'm glad to hear we support their efforts. (Pause. Smiles.) I'm Tracy.

JOEL

I'm having a little trouble processing this. So, these mercenaries -

MR. ANDERSON

Please, call them Marauders. We're trying to improve our brand recognition.

JOEL

These - guys - they do what?

MR. ANDERSON

They intervene where deadly force is needed in sensitive global affairs.

JOEL

Deadly force?

MR. ANDERSON

Well, sometimes just brutal force.

CLAW

We do the dirty work so you don't have to.

JOEL

So, what. Bodyguards for despots? Assassinations?
Coups?

MR. ANDERSON

Little of this, little of that, that's what makes them
mercenaries. Hey, if you'd like sometime I can take
you on a tour of Delta Sector HQ. You would not
believe the size of the guns these guys have!
(Stretches out arms) They're like surfboards! Right,
Claw?

CLAW

Our armaments strike fear in the hearts of our foes,
sir.

RENEE

Oh, that sounds like fun. Count me in!

TRACY

I love to learn about different aspects of the work
environment!

JOEL

I - I have a Master's in Alternative Education from
Berkeley. I spent two years in the Peace Corps. I
found this job through an ad in Mother Jones magazine!
And now I'm working for G.I. Joe?

CLAW

Actually, we're more akin to Cobra.

MR. ANDERSON

(Shrugs)

Joel, it's tough out there. We've got to keep our
heads above water. And so do you. You can have your
ideals or you can have your job.

JOEL

So that's my choice?

CLAW

(Brandishing gun)

It's a free country, hippie. Thanks to us.

JOEL

I'll have my ideals.

TRACY
(raises hand)
Oh! Oh! I'll have his job!

RENEE
Can I have his office?

MR. ANDERSON
I'm sorry to hear that, Joel. You do good work.

JOEL
And I thought this company did, too. Goodbye.

(JOEL exits stage right. MR.
ANDERSON walks to edge of stage
and watches him leave.)

RENEE
Is he gone?

MR. ANDERSON
Yeah.

CLAW
Sir, are you going to just let him just leave like
that? I think he knows too much. Perhaps it's better
if I (cocks gun) plug any potential leaks.

MR. ANDERSON
(rolls eyes)
Oh for god's sake.

(MR. ANDERSON grabs gun, points it
at CLAW and fires. Water comes
out.)

MR. ANDERSON
Okay Gary, you can get out of character now. And you
can stop talking like Christian Bale Batman too.

CLAW
(in nasal voice)
That's a relief. Oof. (Coughs.) Anyone have a lozenge
or something?

TRACY

(rummages through purse)

I have three kinds!

RENEE

(To MR. ANDERSON)

Honestly, Mark, if you need to trim personnel, why don't you just lay people off?

(Blackout. End of Play.)