

"Performance Review" (Scene 1)

Characters:

Director, Analyst

Scene

Director's poorly lit office. A comfortable office chair sits behind a desk. On the desk sits a placard that reads "No Smoking." Across from the desk sits a small, uncomfortable chair. An office door lies beyond the uncomfortable chair.

DIRECTOR relaxes behind their desk propping their feet on its edge. ANALYST tries to find a comfortable position in the small chair across from DIRECTOR's desk while keeping their lit cigarette level. The main source of light should be the lamp on DIRECTOR's desk. The rest of the lighting should only serve to accentuate the characters' actions and the smoke stemming from the cigarette. DIRECTOR's attitude should be relaxed and somewhat bored. It should be obvious they don't want to be having this conversation at all, though their tone is on the lighter side.

Director: As you're no doubt aware, we've been in a depression for some time. As such, we can't afford to pay you for any overtime...or anything else, really.

Analyst: Is this really news?

Director: It's the anything else. I'd appreciate you stopping your moonlighting. It reflects badly on our department.

Analyst: You can't afford to pay me overtime...but you can afford to spy on me. We're in a depression right?

Director: I'm not in charge of the budget around here. I only use it.

Analyst: And you're using it to spy on me-

Director: -And the department. Don't feel singled out.

Analyst: Is that supposed to make me feel better?

DIRECTOR perks up with interest.

Director: Did it?

ANALYST takes a long drag on their cigarette and exhales the smoke towards DIRECTOR who ignores this act of defiance.

Analyst: In a funny way, no.

The interest present in their last line is immediately gone as DIRECTOR swings their feet off the desk to now face ANALYST fully. DIRECTOR is still reclining in the chair.

Director: I tried.

A pause. ANALYST straightens.

Analyst: How exactly are you director of this department?

DIRECTOR leans back in their chair but does not put their feet back up on the desktop.

Director: You see, I'd *love* to fire you and get someone who doesn't go out moonlighting. But it'd take months for the request to go through and even more to hire and train someone new.

Analyst: How does that answer my question?

DIRECTOR chuckles. ANALYST sighs in response as they take a quick puff of the cigarette.

Director: Our friends upstairs are in the same boat with me as I am with you.

Analyst: So...you can't fire me?

Director: I didn't say I *can't*. I *can*...but then I'd be stuck with a bunch of paperwork.

Analyst: If I keep moonlighting, as you call it, what'll you do?

Director: Nothing, probably.

Analyst: So...

ANALYST takes another long drag on their cigarette and slowly exhales towards DIRECTOR. DIRECTOR once again ignores the smoke. DIRECTOR's following lines should be said in a more measured and careful tone than they have used before.

Director: Yes, you can go about moonlighting. I'm not going to do anything about it-

Analyst: *(interrupting)* -So what's-

Director: *(ignoring the interruption)* -Unless I need to.

A pause as ANALYST contemplates the cigarette in their hand as DIRECTOR disinterestedly rocks back and forth in the chair. The rest of DIRECTOR's lines should be said with a hint of menace, in contrast with the previously bored, lighthearted tone.

Director: Remind me of your position here.

Analyst: You're my boss...*and* you're spying-

Director: -I want *you* to remind me.

A pause as ANALYST returns to contemplating the cigarette and DIRECTOR returns to rocking as they wait for the response.

Analyst: Lead analyst-

Director: -Analyst. You shouldn't be going out.

Analyst: Why shouldn't I? It's my free time.

DIRECTOR sighs and stops rocking in the chair.

Analyst: I've worked here for over two decades-

DIRECTOR cuts ANALYST off with a wave.

Director: My superiors and I are worried about...unexpected consequences. How long have you been doing these...activities?

Analyst: Shouldn't you know that?

Director: Unfortunately we only started spying recently.

Analyst: I don't know...close to seven or eight years?

A look of intrigue washes over DIRECTOR. A pause. DIRECTOR suddenly rises out of the chair and exits through the door behind ANALYST.

Analyst: *(Shouting after DIRECTOR)* Does this mean the review is over?

ANALYST rises from the chair, carefully pushes it into DIRECTOR's desk, and turns. ANALYST turns back, taps some ash from the end of the cigarette onto DIRECTOR's desk, and leaves the office in deep thought about what caused DIRECTOR's sudden change in mood. After some time THERAPIST enters and comfortably sits behind the desk.