

Wage Warfare

By Scott Haan

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DEDICATION

*To my office coworkers, past and present,
for making the trenches an interesting place to be.*

PREMIERE PRODUCTION

“Wage Warfare” was first presented on October 13-16, 2011 by the Clinton County Civic Theatre in Frankfort, IN. The roles were originally performed by the following cast (in order of appearance).

HOPEErin O'Connor
BONNIEJeanine Peterson
LOUISEJean Warren
AARON STARR.....Matt Miller
MR. CLOGSWORTH.....Aaron Moon
UPS MANAndy Best
BUFFYCassidy Best

Production Staff

DirectorDeb Smith
Assistant Director.....Stacey Martin
Stage CrewLinda Mooney
Stage CrewNancy Martin
Sound and Light DesignJulie Miller
Sound and Light OperatorMike Mooney
Set Design and ConstructionJerry Thompson

STORY OF THE PLAY

If you've ever had a job, or wished you hadn't, this office comedy is for you. Even on a good day, tensions run high in the customer service department of The Treasure Chest because of two female coworkers who can't stand each other, and a third who is constantly stuck in the middle. But when a chance for a promotion suddenly appears, all three women find themselves fighting for the job, although they don't all fight fair. Will the promotion go to daydreamer Hope, saintly Bonnie, or snarky Louise? A madhouse free-for-all of schemes, sabotage and unlikely alliances erupts, unseen by their idiotic boss. This story is a ridiculous farce...but then, so are a lot of offices!

TIME and PLACE

Current day. One week in the life of coworkers at The Treasure Chest, a mail-order company that sells novelty items to kiddie restaurants and dental offices.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(2 - 3 m, 4 w)

HOPE: In her 20s or 30s. Young and hard-working; because she gets along with most people, she's caught in the middle of a lot of arguments between her two coworkers. They both confide in her, to her eternal regret.

BONNIE: The motherly (or grandmotherly) type. Acts like a sweet, prim and proper lady on the surface, but underneath it lies a devious and manipulative mind.

LOUISE: Not happy unless she's complaining about something, usually some imagined ailment. She is direct, impatient and crotchety, and probably the last person you want in Customer Service.

MR. CLOGSWORTH: The boss. He's a very cheerful and friendly fellow, but heaven help him, he's just not all that bright.

UPS MAN: Roughly Hope's age, clad in that familiar brown uniform.

AARON STARR: Hope's favorite singer.

BUFFY: Young girl in her teens or early twenties, whose sole purpose in life seems to be texting.

DOUBLING: *If necessary, the roles of Aaron Starr and the UPS Man can be doubled.*

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT I

Scene 1: Monday.

Scene 2: Tuesday.

Scene 3: Tuesday, a few hours later.

ACT II

Scene 1: Wednesday.

Scene 2: Thursday.

Scene 3: Friday.

(NOTE: *Props list included at end of script.*)

SETTING

An office. There are three desks. They belong to Bonnie (SR), Hope (CS), and Louise (SL). Each desk is equipped with a laptop computer, a phone, a set of headphones, and various papers. Each desk should have a drawer. If you use tables instead of desks, each table should have a box or a small filing cabinet next to it. Also, there is a bulletin board on the back wall, a table SL with a basket full of papers, and a trash can near the SL desk. The action takes place in the Customer Service area of the office. The SR wing leads to unseen outer rooms, including the hallway, main office, restrooms, break room, storeroom, etc. The SL wing leads to the offices of Mr. Clogsworth and his personal secretary. Doors are optional, but not mandatory.

Hope, Bonnie and Louise have a "Not Available" button on their phones that allows them to step away from their desk without their phone ringing in their absence. Even if not specified in the script, these three women should get in the habit of pressing that button every time they enter or exit. Otherwise the audience might wonder why their phone conveniently fails to ring when they leave the room.

DAYDREAMS

At several points in the show, Hope's mind drifts away into daydreams. It needs to be very clear to the audience when we are in a daydream and when we have returned to reality. Having the stage lights change to blue, red, or some other distinct color will serve as a clear visual cue to the audience that the daydream has begun. (If colored lights are not possible, find some other way to make the daydreams distinct, possibly through music or sound.) Also, for every character except for Hope, the acting within the daydreams should be more melodramatic and over-the-top, both for comedic effect and also to further convey to the audience that these are fantasies instead of reality.

OPTIONAL: AARON STARR PERFORMANCES

You may want to cover any scene changes with music. One possibility: Brief live performances by Aaron Starr (if the role is not doubled). If you cast a musician who can actually play guitar, he could play some riffs for the audience. This would tie into the story, give that actor more time onstage, and entertain the audience.

ACT I

Scene 1

(AT RISE: An office, on a Monday morning. Young HOPE is sitting at her desk CS, typing. BONNIE enters from SR, carrying a purse. She sets it on her desk, which is on SR.)

BONNIE: Good morning, Hope.

HOPE: Morning, Bonnie. How was your weekend?

BONNIE: Mm. Are you sure there was a weekend in there? I blinked and it was over. How about you?

HOPE: Mine was great. I went to an amazing concert Saturday night.

BONNIE: *(Barely listening.)* That's good, dear. Oh my goodness, it is FREEZING in here! Don't you think it's cold?

HOPE: Not really...

BONNIE: *(Rubbing her arms for warmth.)* Brr! I feel like I can see my breath! *(Indicating SL.)* Is anybody else here yet?

HOPE: I haven't seen Louise or Joanne, but Mr. C.'s car was already here when I pulled in.

BONNIE: That man needs a life. I need to ask him something. I'll be right back.

(BONNIE exits SL. A beat later, LOUISE enters from SR and walks across to her desk SL.)

HOPE: Morning, Louise.

(LOUISE merely grunts. HOPE can instantly tell that she's in an especially foul mood, and treads lightly.)

HOPE: *(Cont'd.)* Good weekend?

LOUISE: Visit from my idiot brother-in-law. I had to fight the urge to stab him in the brain.

HOPE: Well, good job refraining from homicide.

LOUISE: *(Fanning herself.)* Holy jumping jackals, is it ever hot in here! I'm about to burst into flames!

End of Freeview

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