

SPENDING TIME

by

David Schreiber

SPENDING TIME

by

David Schreiber

David Schreiber
dave@davidshreiber.net
davids@truedave.com

Copyright ©2007 by David Schreiber.

Cast:

MichaelMale, late 50s. An office worker.

JohnMale, mid 20s. A young man.

Time:

The present

Place:

An office in an ordinary company.

This play is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 Unported License. Please visit the Creative Commons website to get a full description of what rights this Licenses grants you:

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/>

Note that this license **does not include production rights**. Please contact David Schreiber for information on licensing this play for production or for a reading.

(Lights up on an office. Michael is sitting at a desk with a stack of papers that he's working on. Next to him is a cup of coffee. John is watching from the doorway. Michael takes a flask out of a pocket and pours bourbon into his coffee)

MICHAEL

Ah, much better. Okay...the previous year's value was ten thousand, four-hundred, twenty three dollars and seventy two cents. Copy that here, and look on this table for the percentages for this year...

JOHN

Hello, Michael.

MICHAEL

(Michael quickly hides the flask)

What the...? Who are you?

JOHN

John.

MICHAEL

Oh. Hi. Are you new?

JOHN

Sort of. Michael, we need to talk. It's important.

MICHAEL

Sure. Okay. Welcome aboard, by the way. Is Suzanne organizing a welcome lunch? It seems like forever since we had lunch on the company. Do you like Italian? There's this Italian place down on Market St. that I—

JOHN

How do you feel?

MICHAEL

Excuse me?

JOHN

How have you been feeling recently?

MICHAEL

I'm fine. A little busy. It is the end of the quarter. Do I know you?

JOHN

No.

MICHAEL

Huh. Are you sure? You look familiar. This is your first day, right?

JOHN

I don't work here. I was sent to find you.

MICHAEL

Why? Is this some sort of H.R. thing?

JOHN

We're very concerned.

MICHAEL

Well, thanks, but I'm fine.

JOHN

I think we both know that's not true.

MICHAEL

I don't know what you're talking about.

JOHN

Michael...you've always spent a lot of time at the office. Too much, actually. But now—

MICHAEL

Spent too much time...what? Is that what this is about? My work hours?

JOHN

It's more complicated than that.

MICHAEL

Oh, Christ. I thought—nevermind. Thank you for your concern, but I like my job.

JOHN

But it's interfering with...with other things you need to do.

MICHAEL

What other things? Look, I know you H.R. people find this hard to understand, but I like this. I like working with numbers all day. Numbers...make sense to me. I like making sure everything comes out just like it should.

JOHN

It's not good for you to bury yourself in your work like this.

MICHAEL

Excuse me? Look, I said I'm fine. And, quite frankly, I don't need you or anyone else butting in. If you'll excuse me, I've got a stack of papers to get back to.

JOHN

Those aren't important.

MICHAEL

Of course they're important! The quarter just ended! Do you know all the things that need to be done in order to file a quarterly statement?

JOHN

I have some idea. But you don't need to worry about it now.

MICHAEL

You aren't...letting me go. Are you?

JOHN

Letting you go? That's funny. No, you're not being "let go".

MICHAEL

Okay. Well then, I've got a lot of work to do, and an unforgiving deadline.

JOHN

But Michael—

MICHAEL

Look, either tell me what you want, or let me finish my work. Okay?

(Beat. Michael returns to paperwork)

Where was I...let's see...this year it's twelve percent, but with an additional surcharge for prices above—

JOHN

You were in the war.

MICHAEL

What?

JOHN

You fought in the war.

MICHAEL

What does that have to do with anything?

JOHN

I did as well.

MICHAEL

You? The war was a good forty years ago. You can't be older than...late twenties.

JOHN

Twenty-four.

MICHAEL

Is this a joke? Did someone put you up to this? Because it's not funny. Making fun of my...of a veteran's service is—

JOHN

I'm not making fun of you. I'm here to help you.

MICHAEL

Right.

JOHN

Please, Michael—

MICHAEL

I've got to get back to my work. Nice talking to you.

JOHN

It was night, but it was hot. The sky was clear, and there was a full moon. I was on patrol with six other men when we heard a noise and froze.

MICHAEL

What the hell?

JOHN

It turned out the enemy was less than ten meters away. We hunkered down and waited for them to get closer. But we waited too long. My buddy next to me was the first to get shot.

MICHAEL

Stop.

JOHN

Eventually we retreated, but we were cornered next to a house. An abandoned house with a missing wall and no roof.

MICHAEL

Stop it! I'm warning you, if you don't stop this right now—

JOHN

The bullet that killed me nicked an artery. My death was quick. And not as painful as you would think.

MICHAEL

Your death? What are you...wait a minute, who are you?

JOHN

You know who I am, Michael.

MICHAEL
No, I don't.

JOHN
Yes, you do.

MICHAEL
No...no!

JOHN
I've waited a very long time to meet you. Almost forty years.

MICHAEL
Okay. I'm dreaming. That must be it. I'm dreaming. Or I'm having a flashback. Maybe both.

JOHN
I left behind a wife, and a three year-old daughter.

MICHAEL
Come on, Michael. Wake up. Wake up!

JOHN
They struggled hard to live after the war. My wife...my beautiful wife... She had to sell herself to survive. To feed and clothe our daughter.

MICHAEL
Okay, I guess...flashback.

JOHN
She never married again. She got an infection and lost the ability to have children. But they survived.

MICHAEL
You're a hallucination! Go away!

JOHN
Though even now no one in my family, or hers, will have anything to do with either of them.

MICHAEL
Leave me alone.

JOHN
Do you know where you are?

MICHAEL
I'm at work. Being taunted by a figment of my imagination.

When did you get here? JOHN

I don't know. Earlier. MICHAEL

What is the date? JOHN

The date? It's uh...the...uh... MICHAEL

What did you have for breakfast this morning? What was the traffic like? How was the weather? How did you spend the weekend? When was the last time you refilled that flask of yours? JOHN

Where am I? MICHAEL

You already know. JOHN

No. MICHAEL

Yes. JOHN

No! It's not possible. It can't be possible. MICHAEL

Everyone dies eventually. JOHN

But I'm only fifty-eight! MICHAEL

That's not so young. JOHN

And you? What are you doing here? MICHAEL

I told you. I was sent. JOHN

To what? Taunt me? Punish me? MICHAEL

JOHN

Why should I want to do that?

MICHAEL

Because...because...I'm the one that shot you.

JOHN

That's right!

MICHAEL

But I was a soldier! I was doing my duty!

JOHN

That's what you've been telling yourself for decades now.

MICHAEL

It's true! It's not my fault! I did what I had to do.

JOHN

Are you saying you're not responsible for your actions?

MICHAEL

No. It's just...I...

JOHN

Because if you're not, who's responsible for my daughter growing up without a father? For what my wife had to do to survive? For me not being able to protect them and provide for them?

MICHAEL

You would have done the same thing.

JOHN

But I didn't. You did.

MICHAEL

I know.

JOHN

Do you know how long I've waited? All those years I watched you as you whiled away your life away at the office, trying to avoid your guilt. Or at home, drunk. Waiting for you to come here, so I could finally make you face some consequences for your actions? Do you?

MICHAEL

I'm sorry.

JOHN

You knew I was waiting, didn't you? That's why you're here now.

MICHAEL

I'm sorry. I'm sorry. Please, I'm sorry.

JOHN

What makes you think "sorry" is enough?

MICHAEL

It's all I have.

JOHN

Damn.

MICHAEL

What?

JOHN

It's...you...damn it. I thought I could do this.

MICHAEL

Do what?

JOHN

I should leave.

MICHAEL

What? Hold on! Please tell me what you want.

JOHN

It wasn't supposed to be like this.

MICHAEL

What wasn't?

JOHN

Michael, I was sent here...I was sent here to forgive you.

MICHAEL

What?!?

JOHN

Forgive you, and help you. I need to let go. I thought I could do it. But I can't.

MICHAEL

But we're in...we're in hell.

JOHN
(John laughs)

This? No. This isn't hell. This is a nice, safe little purgatory you've built for yourself. You're so afraid of judgment that you're doing the same thing in death that you were in life: spending all your time hiding out at the office. You didn't even notice that you died.

(Pause)

I need to go.

MICHAEL

Please don't.

JOHN

I'll come back later.

MICHAEL

Don't leave me! I don't want to be stuck here.

JOHN

Stuck here? This place is your own creation! You can leave whenever you like.

MICHAEL

And go where? Heaven?

JOHN

If you dare.

MICHAEL

Oh. Okay.

(Beat)

What about you?

JOHN

I'm not ready to face heaven just yet.

MICHAEL

But I thought—

JOHN

Don't worry. I have my own place down here. It's comfortable. I'll make it up there. Sooner or later. See you around.

(John crosses to exit)

MICHAEL

I crashed my car into a tree.

JOHN

What?

MICHAEL
That's how I died. I crashed my car into a tree.

JOHN
Yup.

MICHAEL
I was drunk, wasn't I?

JOHN
Yup.

MICHAEL
Is there anything I can do for you, John?

JOHN
I don't think so.

MICHAEL
Are you sure?

JOHN
Goodbye.

MICHAEL
I'm sorry. I wish I could make things better.

JOHN
I know.

(John exits, left. Michael watches where John
exited. Lights down)

THE END