

PowerPlan

By Mark Bellusci

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CAST:

MURPH: Mid twenties to thirties.

BECK: Mid twenties to thirties.

BILLY: Early to mid twenties.

ARTIE: Mid forties to fifties.

HEATHER: Mid twenties to thirties.

BILLY'S MOM: Mid fifties.

MR. MOMLY: Mid forties.

SCENE 1:

Corporate conference room.

AT RISE:

BECK and MURPH are busily reviewing papers and hand-drawn charts on an easel.

MURPH

(MURPH is clearing his throat and practicing a presentation.)

I'm, like, honored to ... It's cool to be here --

(BECK enters.)

BECK

It's confirmed. Just the head man, no assistants. Tomorrow, 3 sharp.

MURPH

Rock and roll.

(Picks up phone.)

Yo Heather, you want to take one last look at the presentation? ... Cool.

(Hangs up and dials again.)

Artie, we're up.

BECK

Need to nail this.

(HEATHER and ARTIE enter.)
It's on.

MURPH
We all set?

ARTIE
Not if it was up to our genius art director.

HEATHER
Well maybe if you had the production skills of a trained
chimp, we'd--

ARTIE
Carrying punk designers like you for thirty years.

HEATHER
Here we go: old school speech --

BECK
Hey! Pitch mode, remember?

(Angry sighs from both.)

MURPH
(Back to rehearsing.)
"Thank you for this opportunity blah blah blah."

BECK
Then you introduce me and --
(BILLY enters.)
How many times do I have to tell you not to interrupt a
rehearsal?

BILLY
Your spreadsheets are on the laptop.

BECK
Just leave it.

HEATHER
Thanks, Billy.

BILLY
(Leaving, then he turns back.)
You know, you could do so much more with that. You could
use it for presentations.

MURPH

(They chuckle.)
What, like, it does a song and dance?

BILLY

It could present charts and graphs and—

MURPH

It's a cool calculator, yo. But for presenting, people don't want computers.

BECK

They want people.

MURPH

Like, flesh and blood?

ARTIE

Slow down. It's a little confusing to a guy made of chips and wafers.

(Giggles.)

BILLY

One day, the world will be running my presentation software.

MURPH

(He plays with the notebook PC's flap, like it's a mouth talking, then imitates a robotic voice..)
Greetings, earthlings. I will now give the presentation.

(As BILLY is storming off, MURPH, BECK and ARTIE gesture that BILLY is crazy. BILLY suddenly turns back, catching them.)

I'll show you. I'll show you all.
(BILLY exits.)

HEATHER

Do you have to torture him?

BECK

He's not the only one who'll get tortured if we don't nail this pitch.

(They resume rehearsing.)

END OF SCENE

SCENE 2: BILLY's bedroom.

AT RISE: BILLY is feverishly hacking away at a PC. Door knock.

MOM

(Offstage, behind closed door.)
Billy? Please let me in.

BILLY

I'm busy.

MOM

It's 3 in the morning. What are you doing?

BILLY

Awww, ma.
(He opens the door and MOM enters.)

MOM

Fourteen hours a day isn't enough for them?

BILLY

It's not for them. As long as I fix their computers, they're happy.

MOM

Then what are--

BILLY

Tired of being treated like a geek. I could run that company better than twenty of those morons!

MOM

I know you can--

BILLY

And they'll know it, too. When they see my creation, they'll--

MOM

Billy, you need to take a break, get something to eat and --

BILLY

I don't want to eat!

(Beat, then softer, almost pleading.)

I have to finish this. I need to show them.

MOM

Hope you know what you're doing.

(She exits.)

BILLY

(To himself.)

I do. I ...

(He tinkers with the computer.)

If ... I ... just ...

(A sudden flash from the computer display throws BILLY from his chair. MOM knocks urgently on the door.)

MOM

Billy!!

BILLY

(BILLY calmly opens the door.)

Have you scheduled a meeting?

MOM

There was a flash and--

(Noticing his new demeanor.)

What-- What happened to you?

BILLY

I have created mission-critical presentation software that will spawn a global core value paradigm shift.

MOM

What??

BILLY

I will rule the world.

MOM

What are you --

BILLY

With my new presentation software, I have the power, and a plan.

(A revelation.)

A PowerPlan.

MOM

PowerPlan? What is--

BILLY

Oh, you'll see. You'll see, just like the rest of them.

(He lets out an evil laugh.)

MOM

You need a date, son. Bad.

END OF SCENE

SCENE 3: Office conference room.

AT RISE: BECK and MURPH are doing the final meeting preparations.

BECK

Have everything?

MURPH

Yup.

(BILLY enters.)

BECK

Computer's working fine. We're all set.

BILLY

No, you're not.

MURPH

We're not?

BILLY

(As he walks to the PC and loads a disk.)
You forgot ... the presentation software.

We've got a meeting in--

BECK

Dude, we don't need--

MURPH

Oh, you need it, funny man.

BILLY

(BILLY opens the screen and shoves it in front of
BECK.)

The hell are you--

BECK

(Light flashes from the display onto BECK. His eyes
glaze over.)

With a fractional factorial analysis, we will determine the
optimal strategy for --

(Looking at his watch.)
Dude, stop talking in tongues. We--
(BILLY shoves the PC in MURPH's face.)
have forecasted maximal R.O.I. based on a zero budget
performance ratio--

MURPH

(BECK and MURPH mumble marketing babble as BILLY talks
above them.)

Yes, minions, it's a new world. The world ... of PowerPlan.
(Evil laugh.)

BILLY

END OF SCENE

SCENE: Conference room.

AT RISE: BECK and MURPH present in automaton voices to a
baffled client. BILLY watches the process.

We will coalesce consumer facing touchpoints ...

BECK

... and core brand values ...

MURPH

BECK

... while satisficing key segment churn ...

MURPH

Leading to a 360-degree integration sensation, and a win-win situation.

(Beat.)

MR. MOMLY

What??

BECK

Perhaps more dialoguing would clarify--

MR. MOMLY

A 360-degree integration sensation? You talking about my pies or a porn flick?

MURPH

It will be clear once you establish a symbiotic comfort level with PowerPlan.

MR. MOMLY

Boy, I ain't got enough years left on the planet to get comfortable with --

(BECK flashes the projector light directly into CLIENT'S eyes. He then speaks in an automaton voice.)
Suddenly, it is clear.

BECK

Integration ...

MR. MOMLY

My account is yours.

MURPH

Migration

BILLY

This is just the start, my faithful followers.

MR. MOMLY

Domination ...

BILLY

The world is mine!

END OF SCENE

SCENE 4: Office conference room.

AT RISE: HEATHER is doodling at the table. ARTIE enters, reading a memo while walking. He obliviously walks towards HEATHER's side, until they notice each other. They both groan, then ARTIE heads to the other side. HEATHER returns to her doodling. Beat, then BECK and MURPH enter, both looking like automatons. They sit.

MURPH

Greetings, productive employees.

ARTIE

(Laughing.)

That's good. Who you supposed to be?

BECK

(Ignoring ARTIE'S question.)

Our objective is to disseminate optimal optimistic news: Mom's Pies is ours.

(Both lines are deadpan sarcastic.)

HEATHER

Yay.

ARTIE

Whoopie.

BECK

We owe it all to one man ...

(BILLY enters. ARTIE begins to laugh, then MURPH and BECK fawn over BILLY.)

ARTIE

(Laughing.)

You guys. Always with the jokes.

MURPH

Joking is not a mission-critical strategy.

ARTIE

(Still chuckling.)
All right, enough. I get it.

BILLY

No, you don't, because you don't shut your mouth long enough to listen.

ARTIE

You better watch your --

MURPH

Negative dialoguing with the sentient one is frowned upon.

ARTIE

I can't believe this.

BILLY

Oh, you'll believe, production boy.

(BILLY swings the projector to light ARTIE'S face.)

ARTIE

Get that out of my face!

MURPH

Are you seeing the path?

ARTIE

No, but you're about to see stars.

HEATHER

Can we just--

(BILLY shifts the light beam to HEATHER.)

HEATHER

(Shielding her eyes.)
Um, hello?

BECK

Do you feel any different?

HEATHER

Other than the usual numbness of working here?

BILLY

Damn it!

ARTIE

Let me know when the next feel-good meeting is ... so I can call in sick.

(He exits.)

MURPH

Thank you, productive employee.

ARTIE

(To MURPH and BECK.)

You both need a vacation.

(To BILLY.)

And you, need a life.

(He exits.)

BILLY

(Yelling offstage.)

Oh, I've got a life. Thousands of 'em -- and the number is growing every day.

HEATHER

(Getting up to leave.)

Mom's Pies. It's an honor to help keep America fat and happy.

BECK

Thank you, productive employee.

HEATHER

(Staring at the two execs.)

Forget vacations. Therapy.

(She exits.)

BECK

I am perplexed.

MURPH

All who see the power of PowerPlan are possessed by its perfection.

BECK

Except them.

BILLY

Shut up and get that clown client.

BECK

Of course, tech titan.

(They exit.)

BILLY

Why didn't it work? Has to be a reason. Has to be ...

(BECK and MURPH return with CLIENT, who kneels at BILLY's feet.)

MR. MOMLY

Please display more PowerPlan charts and graphs.

BILLY

Stop groveling. You want a taste, you pay like everyone else.

(CLIENT quickly hands a crumpled check to BECK, then puts his face in front of the PC. He sighs with delight.)

BILLY

Get him out of here.

BECK

Yes, diode deity.

(They pull CLIENT and PC offstage.)

END OF SCENE

SCENE 5: HEATHER'S office.

AT RISE: HEATHER is doodling with a pencil and sketch pad. ARTIE enters brusquely and closes the door.

HEATHER

This day has been weird enough without having to get into it with you.

ARTIE

You got bigger problems than me.

HEATHER

Like what?

ARTIE

The people around here. Never a bright bulb among them, but automatons?

HEATHER

What do you expect from suits?

ARTIE

This is different. Like the Stepford wives reenter the workplace. For some reason, the only ones who haven't changed are me and you.

HEATHER

Just the two of us. My lucky day.

ARTIE

You think I'm thrilled?

HEATHER

Finally, we agree on something. Glad we had this little chat.

ARTIE

(Chuckling to himself derisively.)
Why do I even try?

(He exits. She shakes her head, sighs, and goes back to drawing on her pad. Beat, then phone rings.)

HEATHER

Yeah?

BECK

You are required to attend a PowerPlan presentation.

HEATHER

Great, I've only got eight deadlines today.

BECK

Tight deadlines must be embraced as a core value strategy of
--

HEATHER

(She hangs up, then to herself.)
Man, they are acting weird.

END OF SCENE

SCENE 6: Conference room.

AT RISE: BECK, MURPH, CLIENT, ARTIE and BILLY are seated.
HEATHER enters.

BECK

Greetings, productive employee. We are proud to introduce
the chairman of Mom's Pies, John Momly.

HEATHER

So you're "Mom?"

MR. MOMLY

That is correct.

HEATHER

Was there ever a Mom?

MR. MOMLY

Yes, my dad. And his dad before him and his--

HEATHER

Get on with it.

MR. MOMLY

Sorry, sir.

(ARTIE and HEATHER look at each other and mouth the
word, "Sir?")

BECK

We have compiled a PowerPlan presentation to move the
adoption curve to early majority--

BILLY

(Noticing HEATHER doodling.)
What are you doing?

HEATHER

Hmm?

BILLY

Pay attention to--

ARTIE

Who the hell are you to--

(He rises up, but so do the BECK, MURPH and CLIENT, each brandishing a coffee mug or book as a weapon.)

MR. MOMLY

Please maintain a backward-leaning position.

(HEATHER'S pencil breaks from doodling.)

HEATHER

Great.

BILLY

(Looking at his watch.)
I'm on a schedule here.

(ARTIE shakes his head and sighs. They all sit and resume.)

MURPH

We are striving to overlay fully integrated geographic surround strategies.

(The next two lines overlap.)

ARTIE

What??

MURPHY

Huh??

(They suddenly flash the projection on ARTIE, who shields his eyes.)

ARTIE

Can't you morons control that thing?

(They return the screen to its normal position.)

BILLY

(Sotto voce, to himself.)
Damn it!

BECK

The buzz generated by this 360-degree CRM campaign will --

(They again shift the laptop directly into HEATHER's face. Instead of turning away, she stares back.)

ARTIE

Here we go again.

HEATHER

(In the same monotone as the others.)
I ... understand.

ARTIE

What??

BILLY

At last!

HEATHER

Must generate buzz at a robust level of marketing granularity that--

(ARTIE notices the broken pencil. He quickly places his second pencil in her hand. After he does so, HEATHER snaps out of her automaton state.)
Is this almost ... I've got eight deadlines to ...

(She exits, as does ARTIE, who locks eyes with BILLY.)

END OF SCENE

SCENE 7: HEATHER'S office.

AT RISE: HEATHER enters, followed closely by ARTIE.

HEATHER

I don't know, I just kind of blanked out--

ARTIE

You didn't blank--

HEATHER

Next thing I know, I'm doodling with your pencil and --

ARTIE

It's the pencil!

HEATHER

What?

ARTIE
The pencil. It saved you.

HEATHER
From what?

ARTIE
From becoming them.

HEATHER
Stop with the voodoo stuff--

ARTIE
What, you didn't see them in that room? A new client being barked at?

HEATHER
Look, all I want to do is get through this day and--

ARTIE
Just hold on to that pencil.

HEATHER
(Laughing.)
This pencil has nothing to do with--

(Her e-mail beeps. She reads, then sits back, shocked.
ARTIE reads aloud over her shoulder.)

ARTIE
"Pencil-type utensils and/or devices are not aligned with this agency's new brand personae and will be expunged forthwith."

(Phone rings. ARTIE hits speaker.)

ARTIE
What do you want?

BILLY
Did you receive, review and reflect upon the memo on--

ARTIE
We're keeping our pencils, modem mouth. Last I checked, this was a free country.

BILLY

Not for long. We shipped PowerPlan to our bold leaders in Washington. They've already introduced a bill to outlaw those "foreign, subversive writing death sticks."

ARTIE

You're sick.

BILLY

And you're an endangered species.

ARTIE

Not as long as we have pencils.

BILLY

Until they wear out.

ARTIE

We'll use them to deprogram your zombies.

BILLY

Ah, the noble dreams of the defeated.
(Evil laugh.)

ARTIE

(Hangs up.)
Damn it.

HEATHER

He's bluffing.

ARTIE

He's got Washington.

HEATHER

We've got to do something.

ARTIE

How many pencils you have?

HEATHER

I don't know, four or five?

BECK

(Phone rings. HEATHER hits speaker.)
Per our enterprise edict, I will downsize pencil-type
utencils A.S.A.P.

(Next two lines simultaneously.)

HEATHER
No--

ARTIE
Fine--

HEATHER
(She hangs up.)
You're giving up?

ARTIE
Hell no. We're going to convert him.

HEATHER
But--

(Knock on the door. HEATHER gives ARTIE the quiet signal and sneaks behind the door. HEATHER opens it.)

BECK
Pencil type utensils are counterproductive to --

(ARTIE grabs BECK and wrestles him to the floor.)

ARTIE
The pencil!

(HEATHER pries BECK's hand open and places a pencil in it. BECK stares at it.)

BECK
What is--

ARTIE
It'll help you get back to normal.

BECK
Normal is not optimal. Growth is optimal.

HEATHER
The pencil, Beck. Feel it.

BECK

Feelings are extraneous.

(He throws pencil to the floor and stomps it.)
There is only PowerPlan.

(ARTIE and HEATHER push him out the door.)

HEATHER

It should've worked! Why didn't it--

ARTIE

Must be a short window before PowerPlan fries theirs brains.
(He sits down, dejected.)

HEATHER

No! There's got to be something. There's got to be...
(She pulls out a big sketch board and starts doodling.)

ARTIE

What are--

HEATHER

Maybe it's not the pencil that saved me. Maybe it's the
possibility behind the pencil.

ARTIE

I don't under--

HEATHER

Shut up and doodle.
(She hands him a sketch pad and pencil and they both
doodle. Beat, then a knock on the door.)

HEATHER

Give me your doodlings and get the door.

ARTIE

What are --

HEATHER

Just do it!

(ARTIE shrugs and does so. MURPH enters and HEATHER
displays the doodles.)

MURPH

Divergent paths with pencil-type utensils are pernicious to PowerPlan.

HEATHER

What do you see, Murph?

MURPH

The works of an anachronistic utensil that --

HEATHER

Look!

MURPH

Looking represents an inefficient time allocation to--

HEATHER

If you don't see things differently after really looking, we'll break our pencils on the spot.

ARTIE

(To HEATHER.)

The hell are you--

HEATHER

The final stand.

ARTIE

But--

HEATHER

What's the sense of continuing if there are just a few slivers of graphite between us and them?

(To MURPH.)

Deal?

MURPH

Agreed.

(He stops, stares, pauses.)

HEATHER

What do you see?

MURPH

(Staring at doodlings.)

Crude etchings indicative of a less mature era.
Representing the feeble efforts of prior generations, with
...

(Revelatory. Starting to come out of it.)
lines ... that are freely drawn, reflecting the ...
individual thoughts ... of the artist ... relying on
his or her own imagination, creativity ... and a single
pencil.

(Shakes his head.)
Where am I?

HEATHER

Murph!

(They hug. Door bursts open. BILLY, BECK and CLIENT
enter. BILLY flashes PC in MURPH's face, which returns
him to automaton state. CLIENT and BECK grab ARTIE.
POWERPIMP and MURPH grab HEATHER.)

ARTIE

No!

BILLY

You will de-pencil now.

HEATHER

Think, Murph. You were almost--

(MURPH goes to the drawer and gets remaining pencils.
He also rips them off HEATHER'S and ARTIE'S necks.)

BILLY

Don't you know you can't stop progress?

(BILLY flashes the PC light at both of them. Though
they resist, they ultimately become automatons.)

ARTIE and HEATHER (in unison)
We are ... beginning ... to see the light.

BILLY

At last.

ARTIE and HEATHER (in unison)
We strive ... to adhere to ... the PowerPlan.

(Looking out to the audience.)
Just a few more.

(Lights up on audience as BILLY points the laptop to
the audience as the automatons chant.)

BECK, MURPH, MR. MOMLY, HEATHER, ARTIE (In unison)
We are a forward thinking society. We do not stray from
strategy. We adhere to PowerPlan. We are a forward
thinking society...

END