A Small Issue

A short play By Peter B. Sonenstein

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Cast of Characters
in order of appearance

JASPER, male, 29, no specified race, sexuality or level of ability.

FATIMA, female, 32, no specified race, sexuality or level of ability.

GENE, male, 50, no specified race, sexuality or level of ability.

Setting

7:45AM - The offices of an architecture firm in Richmond, VA. A loft-like space with great attention to the details of the design. Many desks are artfully arranged throughout the space. There are building models on display - large buildings: libraries, airports, skyscrapers,

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At rise, JASPER is at his desk scrolling through email on his computer.

FATIMA ENTERS the office holding a tray with 3 coffees, a large tote bag, a purse and balancing a phone at her ear.

JASPER
Thank God!

FATIMA waves him off and puts the coffees on his desk.

JASPER
Did you get any Splenda?

FATIMA turns away, waving him off.

FATIMA
(into the phone)
Yes, thank you. Hi. I am trying to track a package? Gold and Associates - GOL4VX7. Yes. Yes. It went out yesterday for early AM delivery today. Yes.

JASPER
So no Splenda?

FATIMA
(digging a piece of paper out of her tote bag)
I have the tracking number... I have it... I have- Here. It's 4112- Sorry. Are you ready? It's 41W2, 4372, 99Y7, 2323.

GENE ENTERS carrying a small laptop bag and a newspaper.

GENE
(to JASPER)
Morning.

GENE zeros in on the coffees.

FATIMA
(into the phone)
Yes, I can wait. Thank you.

GENE
(to JASPER)
No Splenda?

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FATIMA
(into the phone)
It was supposed to be there by 7:30AM - that's the early AM delivery time, right? Well, what about in that city? OK then. Because my client said it didn't arrive.

JASPER
What didn't arrive?

FATIMA waves him off.

GENE
The Splenda apparently. I have some in the kitchen. You?

JASPER
Two please.

GENE puts his things down on his desk and EXITS to the kitchen.

FATIMA
(into the phone)
Well what does your system say?

JASPER
What didn't arrive? Not Casey.

FATIMA gives him a wide-eyed look.

JASPER (CONT'D)
No. Shit.

FATIMA
Yes, I am still here. It did? That's great. When? OK, because I was worried we didn't do the early AM - I'm sorry? They what? Can you repeat that? They did? Because they are saying it didn't arrive. What address do you have? Delivery address. That's correct. And you say they- well, do you still have the package? It's on the truck. OK - I need it re-delivered. No, there has been some kind of mistake. It has to be there this morning.

GENE ENTERS with a handful of Splenda packets which he tosses on the desk next to the coffees.

GENE
(to JASPER)
What's the matter?

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JASPER
Casey.

GENE
She sent that yesterday.

JASPER
It's not there.

GENE
Why not?

JASPER shrugs.

GENE
Did she send them-
(to FATIMA)
Did you send them for early AM?

FATIMA nods vigorously.

FATIMA
(into the phone)
No, this is extremely important. They need this package this morning. What are my options?... Tomorrow? Tomorrow is not an option. Well is there someone there who can help me?

GENE
Really? Really?

JASPER
What do you want to do?

GENE
Let me think.

FATIMA
(into the phone)
Look, I know this isn't your fault I'm just trying to figure out - Can you contact the driver?

GENE
Do you have our last hardcopy?

JASPER nods and EXITS to the conference room.

FATIMA
(into the phone)
How is that possible? I mean, how is it fucking possible that you have thousands of drivers running around the country and you can't contact ANY of them?

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GENE
Fatima?

FATIMA
(into the phone)
You hear how ridiculous that sounds, right? I mean they are all carrying those little tablets- I am just trying to get my package where it needs to go - which is your entire business, right?

JASPER ENTERS pushing a large, rolling garbage can with an Iron Mountain logo on the side. It has a large silver padlock on it.

FATIMA
(into the phone)
Is it too much to ask that you do the thing you are in business to DO??

GENE
(taking the phone from FATIMA, into the phone)
Hello? Hi, sorry. She'll call you back.

GENE hangs up the phone.

FATIMA
Gene!

GENE
That was going nowhere.

JASPER
They were all put in the shred bin.

FATIMA
They still have the package.

GENE
For Casey?

FATIMA
Yes. It's on the truck.

GENE
It doesn't matter.

JASPER
What happened?

FATIMA
They refused the delivery.

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GENE and JASPER are speechless.

FATIMA
Casey. They refused the delivery.

JASPER
Why?

GENE
(to JASPER)
Do you have the key?

JASPER
I thought you did.

GENE
Why would I have the key?

JASPER
I don't have it! Why would they refuse the delivery?

FATIMA
I have no idea - isn't the board meeting today?

GENE
Four PM.

FATIMA lets out a primal scream.

GENE and JASPER are staring at the garbage bin.

GENE
We'll need to get them out of there.

JASPER
No shit.

FATIMA
They moved the date up two weeks and we still got it done.

GENE
(searching his desk drawers)
If we take the last hardcopy and drive right now we can make it to Atlanta by - 3:30?

JASPER
Maybe Lorraine has the key?

JASPER starts searching another desk.

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FATIMA
This is insane.

JASPER
(to FATIMA)
Can you check Austin's desk?

FATIMA
For what?

JASPER
For the key to the fucking- fucking shred thing!

GENE's cellphone begins to RING.

FATIMA stands at another desk.

FATIMA
What am I looking for?

JASPER
A key!

FATIMA
(searching)
Any key?

JASPER
A small key - for a padlock.

GENE
(answering his phone)
Good morning Ted.

JASPER and FATIMA stop cold and stare at GENE.

GENE
(into phone)
Yes, I heard there was an issue with the- Oh. Oh. Yes, I know that- Ah. I see. I understand. Of course. That makes sense, yes. We're going to drive a copy down there. Around 3:30. Yes, I will bring it personally. Yes. So sorry, Ted. Won't happen again. Yes, I bet. OK. See you later Ted. Bye.

GENE hangs up the phone. He puts it in his pocket.

JASPER and FATIMA looks at him expectantly.

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GENE
In 1907-

FATIMA / JASPER
Jesus Christ! / Oh. My. God.

GENE
AHEM! IN 1907. In 1907, James Casey, along with his brother George and another partner started the American Messenger Company. He was 19 years old.

FATIMA
What does this have to// do with-

GENE
The company was extraordinarily successful and in 1948 he, along with his brother George and their other siblings created a charitable foundation with their wealth - the Annie E. Casey Foundation named in honor of their mother who held the family together after their father died. The American Messenger Company later changed their name to United Parcel Service. UPS.

JASPER
Yeah?

GENE
All the money at Casey came from UPS. All the money. Two point two billion dollars. Twenty seven million for the new headquarters, forty five for the regional offices. All of it, everything, from UPS. U. P. S.

FATIMA
(hold her head in her hands, looking ill)
Oh...

GENE
U. P. S.

FATIMA
Oh.... I....

JASPER
What? What?

FATIMA
I... sent it FedEx.

GENE picks up a wooden chair.

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GENE
YOU SENT IT FEDEX! FEDEX! FEDEX!

GENE beats the locked garbage can with the wooden chair violently and repeatedly. The top of the garbage can cracks open.

GENE stops and sits down on his desk.

FATIMA
I'm sorry. I should have-

GENE
Yes. Well, here we are.

JASPER, cautious, goes to the garbage can and begins digging around. He pulls out a sheaf of papers.

GENE
(to JASPER)
Is that all of it?

JASPER
I think so - yes, it's a whole draft. It has some notes on it but they're in pencil.

GENE
OK. Here's what we're going to do. We're going to drive to Atlanta, clean up that copy on the way, and beg Ted for forgiveness.

JASPER
I could email the-

GENE
In person.
(to JASPER)
We can take your car, since you love to show it off.

JASPER
My car? That's like 600 miles. It's a Tesla. I can go, like, 250 miles, max.

GENE
(to FATIMA)
Do you drive a normal car?

FATIMA
It's a Honda.

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GENE
(to JASPER)
Grab some erasers.

GENE picks up his newspaper and laptop bag and heads to the door.

FATIMA and JASPER stare at each other.

GENE
(without turning around)
Let's go!

GENE EXITS

End of Play

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Enjoy this play?

Let me know what you think!

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