



A VALUABLE ASSET V6

A short play by Supratim Mitra
(with some more tinkering by Nick)

The play takes place in a pub. Manager and Employee walk into the room from stage left and sit across a table.

3 CHARACTERS (Any mix of genders):

The Manager
Pierre (aka Bob) - the Employee
The Manager's Manager

Manager: Hi Bob, how are you? All good?

Employee: Not too bad. Work is busy.

Employee freezes

Manager *(walks to front stage and speaks to the audience)*:

This is Bob. He has been in my team for 5 years.
I'm his manager. Though I must admit, I've actually no idea
what he does for the company.
Truth be known, I'm not overly familiar with what I do
for the company.

Employee unfreezes

Employee: Just as a matter of interest, why did you decide we should
have this meeting in the pub?
You're not making me redundant and getting me out of
the building so they can change the locks on the office doors
are you?

Employee freezes

Manager *(walks to front stage and speaks to the audience)*:

Now why didn't I think of that?
Best idea he's ever had.
(Pause)
Probably the ONLY good idea he's ever had.
I'll put that to the board !

Employee unfreezes

Manager: Well you know me. I'm all about making work fun and
keeping our employees happy.

Manager freezes

Employee *(walks to front stage and speaks to the audience)*:

This is my manager. I know her name but I can't bring myself
to use it. "Making work fun?". She's about as much
FUN as being stuck in a lift with Keir Starmer.
She's never ever taken ANY of us to the pub.

Manager unfreezes

Manager: So Bob, as you may know this meeting is all about interfacing with you and sharing the good news of your year end bonus.

(Manager slides a letter towards the Employee)

So this is your year end bonus. I know it's not much but... it is what it is.

Employee: Are you taking the piss?!

Manager: Sorry?

Employee: I mean, we've all had a difficult couple of years what with COVID and everything.
But you made us stay in the office while everyone else was...
(He makes a two handed two finger 'inverted comma' gesture)
'working from home'. You've got rid of staff using the pandemic as an excuse so we've had to work harder ever before and this is HALF the bonus I got last year.

Manager: Well as you know Bob...
(She looks at her phone and reads...)
...market dynamics have not been in our favour, and the overall pie has got smaller so keeping in line with the bell curve of performance appraisal and mindful of the company's bottom line, the senior management think that this remuneration appropriately reflects your performance.

Employee: Sorry, if you'll excuse me for a minute.

(Employee takes out a piece of paper from his pocket. Puts four ticks on the paper).

Four out of five! Damn!

Manager: What's that?

Employee: Nothing much. Back at the office we were having a bet on how many bits of corporate jargon you'd use. I got 4 out 5. I got... 'market dynamics', 'the pie has become smaller', 'bell curve' and 'bottom line'. You missed "we appreciate your frustration". I was SURE you'd say that. You normally say that every year.

Manager: Oh goodness, yes. How could I forget? That was on my list.
So yes...

She clears her throat

...we appreciate your frustration.

Employee: Thanks.

He ticks the last box on the list

But do you really?

Manager: Do I really what?

Employee: Appreciate my frustration.

Manager: Oh that! Oh God no! But it makes it sound like we give a shit.

Employee: Right, I know. That is why normally when I reply I usually say...
"I really appreciate this job". You know... it sounds like
I give a shit.

Manager: Talking of which... your salary. Im really sorry but you won't
be getting an increase this year.

Employee: Sooo.. just like last year.

Manager: Yes.

Employee: And the year before.

Manager: Hmmm...yes. But I swear to God that next year we will try to
furnish you with an increase.

Employee: Please don't take God's name in vain.

Manager: Oh I'm sorry I didn't realise you were religious.

Employee: I'm not. Only when I'm praying for a miracle.

Manager: Oh! Do they ever come true?

Employee: Sadly not... you're still here!

Manager: What?

Employee: Look.... everything's gone up...
heating, electricity, council tax, groceries, travel,
EVERYTHING has gone up... EXCEPT MY SALARY.

Manager: Of course, Bob... As I said, I appreciate your frustration, but...
(She again refers to her phone)
....please do not take lightly the invaluable experience and
skill set that you are establishing for yourself in the process
of working within the confines of this prestigious organisation.
It will serve you well in your future.

Employee: Somebody shoot me! I am thirty five years old..this IS
"my future". I do not need more bullshit. I need money.
Did you know that the Chairman's salary has gone up
by 40% this year?

Manager: Oh come on, Bob. You shouldn't believe everything you read
in the media.

Employee: It's in the Company's Annual Report!

Manager: Well that's as maybe but...
(She appears to admit to confusion)
What's an 'Annual Report' again?

Employee: Are you for real?!

Manager: *(Reading from her phone again)*
Please bear in mind the Chairman is regarded by many as not
realising his earning potential given his skill base in corporate
turnarounds, headhunters are offering him remuneration
well above his current package which reflects the high
demand for his services in the market.

Employee: In other words you've spun the media a line about him being
in demand which is actually total nonsense and what he
ACTUALLY wants is to buy a new yacht.

Manager: No. No no no no not at all.
(Pause)
Well actually a super yacht.

Employee: A SUPER yacht? What is he - an oligarch?

Manager: Well have some sympathy ... all his friends at the Garrick have got super yachts.
Imagine how you would feel if, say, all your friends have the latest iPhone and you were still using a Nokia.

Nokia phone ringtone sounds. Employee holds up his 2010 Nokia phone

Manager: Ah... Well look Bob, the Chairman's compensation is deemed by independent regulators to aptly reflect his ability to steer the ship.

Employee: You mean his super yacht?

Manager: Yes, no, yes, no.. the ship. The corporate vessel, so to speak. That is what they told me. The ability to steer the ship through these troubled waters.

Employee: Steer the ship? He's thrown more people OFF the ship than P&O Ferries.
He fired one quarter of the workforce in the last year.
Also, just out of curiosity, who is this "they" you keep referring to?

Manager *(almost hushed and scared tone)*:
No one knows who "they" is. It may be MY manager, or my manager's manager. Or MI6. I'm not party to such high level information.
(She speaks in a stage whisper)
Nobody knows... but they are always watching and listening.

Employee: Like Big Brother.

Manager: The TV show?

Employee: No, the book.

Manager: They made a book of the TV show?

Employee *(shaking his head and sighing in disbelief)*:
No... 1984... oh never mind
Honestly, this company moves in mysterious ways.
Like God... and shopping trolleys.

Manager: Bob, I am afraid we need to wrap up the meeting now. I've got a meeting with MY manager in here after you and I'm due to make a management presentation to the management's management team this afternoon. You know... the presentation that I prepared on process improvement and streamlining.

Employee: You have no idea what "process improvement" and "streamlining" means, do you?

Manager: If I'm honest...

Employee: Also do you know who actually prepared the presentation you're giving the management team today?

Manager: Er... I did it.

Employee: Nice try... it was ME.

Manager: Oh tomatoes, tomatoes... We are all one big, happy family here, Bob.

Employee: We most certainly are NOT like one big happy family. Not like ANY kind of family. I can't ever recall making my mum redundant and putting my sisters on zero hours.

Manager: Well lets just say that you and I wrote it together shall we? Teamwork makes the dream work, eh?

Employee: Have you actually read it?

Manager: Er... not exactly.

Employee (*walks to front stage and speaks to the audience*):
Conclusive proof. Not exactly the smartest person in the room. Actually she's not the smartest person in any room.

Back to conversation

Employee: Well thank you again for your invaluable contribution.

The Manager's Manager walks in and spots them

Manager: Anyway. Must get on. My manager is here so please make yourself scarce. We have important business.
Discussing the next redundancy cycle.

Employee: Redundancy? Are we going to be made redundant?

Manager *(laughs nervously)*

Whoopsie! Oh no no. Nothing. Forget I said that.
Bob, what I really need you to understand is that,
“Part of company culture is path-dependent –
it's the lessons you learn along the way.” Jeff Bezos said that.

Employee: Huh? What has that got to do with anything?

Manager: Nothing, Bob. Nothing at all. They told me to throw in a Jeff Bezos quote. They said it will make me look switched on.

Employee: Switched on? You're about as 'switched on' as a torch with the bulb missing.

Manager: Bit rude.

Employee: How long have we worked together?

Manager: Oooh.. about five years?

Employee: Marvellous. Just for the record my name's not Bob. Have you ever met a French guy called Bob. My name's Pierre.

Manager: *(A bit shocked)* IS IT? Oh, you're French! I'm sorry, Bob.

He leaves and the Manager's Manager joins and sits

Manager's Manager:

So Angela, as you may know this meeting is to catch up with you and share the good news of your year end bonus.

(He/she carries on talking and fades out)

Of course, Angela, market dynamics have not been in our favour, and the overall pie has got smaller so keeping in line with the bell curve of performance appraisal and mindful of the company's bottom line, the senior management think that this remuneration appropriately reflects your performance.

Manager: My name's not Angela... It's Trish...

