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The Business Lunch

By Sean Slater

Scene: *A restaurant.*

(Lights up. Early afternoon. JERRY sits at a table alone. He is nervously waiting for someone. MR.BAXTER enters.)

JERRY. Mr. Baxter?

MR. BAXTER. Paul! Hey, Paul. Good to see you, Paul. How ya doin, Paul? You're looking well, Paul. How's the family, Paul. Glad you could make it, Paul.

JERRY. Actually my name's Jerry.

MR. BAXTER. Paul...first rule of business. Don't correct the boss.

JERRY. Oh...sorry, sir.

MR. BAXTER. Don't worry about it, Paul. What are you having? Waiter!

(WAITER enters)

JERRY. Well, I thought I'd try the steak...

MR. BAXTER. Have you ever had buffalo? Delicious meat. Have the buffalo. I swear it taste like they cut it right off a God's ass. Absolutely superb. You're having the buffalo. Everything else on the menu is crap! You hear me crap! They should only serve buffalo because everything else is like eating boiled crap! Boiled crap I tell ya! Buffalo! Can't beat it! Buffalo sandwich that's what you'll have! A buffalo sandwich! It doesn't get much better than that! Waiter!

WAITER . Yes, sir?

MR. BAXTER. My friend and I are ready to order.

WAITER. Wonderful, sir.

MR. BAXTER. My friend will have the buffalo...

WAITER. Excellent. And for you, sir?

MR. BAXTER. I'll have the steak.

WAITER. Wonderful. And what will you be drinking this afternoon?

MR. BAXTER. We'll have the Chateau Don Fresco.

WAITER. Wonderful choice, sir. I'll be back with your bottle in just a few moments.

MR. BAXTER. Now Paul, let's get down to business.

JERRY. Yes, sir.

MR. BAXTER. I want to start with marketing.

JERRY. I thought we were here to talk about sales?

MR. BAXTER. Paul. Second rule of business. Don't correct the boss!

JERRY. I thought that was the first rule of business, sir?

MR. BAXTER. Paul. Paul, Paul, Paul, Paul, Paul, Paul, Paul...Paul! You're not off to a good start!

JERRY. Sorry, sir.

MR. BAXTER. Don't worry about it Paul. Paul the reason I want to talk sales with you is-

JERRY. Wait, so are we going to talk sales now?

MR. BAXTER. Paul.... Do you hate me?

JERRY. Why...? No, sir.

MR. BAXTER. Why do you hate me, Paul?

JERRY. I don't hate you, sir.

MR. BAXTER. Come on Paul...you can say it.

JERRY. No sir. I don't hate you.

MR. BAXTER (*Picks up a steak knife*). Paul, you know...and I know...that you...want to drive this steak knife...right into my heart.

JERRY. No sir.

MR. BAXTER. Come on Paul. Do it! Do it Paul! Drive the steak knife into my heart, Paul!

JERRY. Sir!

MR. BAXTER. Do it Paul! End me! Kill me Paul! Right in this fucking four-star restaurant! Do it Paul!

JERRY. No sir, I won't do it!

(Beat)

MR. BAXTER. ...Good decision, Paul. Good decision. Because you know what? That was a trick.

JERRY. I...I kind of figured you weren't serious, sir.

MR. BAXTER. I didn't want you to stab me in the chest with this steak knife.

JERRY. Yes sir.

MR. BAXTER. It was just a joke. All right Paul, no more jokes. Joke time is over. We are here to discuss business.

JERRY. Okay sir, where would you like to start?

MR. BAXTER. I want to start...with sales!

JERRY. Good sir, because I happen to have the sales figures right—

MR. BAXTER. No, no Paul. No. I don't want to talk about *our* sales. I want to start with the sales of...dramatic pause...Hadenhut!

JERRY. Hadenhut?

MR. BAXTER. Hadenhut!

JERRY. I...I don't understand sir, are they a competitor?

MR. BAXTER. No, Paul. They are not a competitor.

JERRY. ...So why are we going to talk about their sales?

MR. BAXTER. Paul, did I tell you about the third rule of business?

JERRY. Uh...Can I guess sir?

MR. BAXTER. You don't have to guess Paul. Cuz' I'm gonna tell you...DON'T CORRECT THE BOSS!

JERRY. Sorry again, sir.

MR. BAXTER. Don't worry about it Paul. Now back to Hadenhut!

JERRY. So why are we talking about their sales, sir?

MR. BAXTER. Whoa! Slow down Paul! You're on fire here! Don't you want to know what they make?

JERRY. I guess so, sir.

MR. BAXTER. They make...dramatic pause...beanbag chairs!

JERRY. ...Beanbag...chairs, sir?

MR. BAXTER. That's right Paul...Beanbag chairs!

JERRY. Why do we need to talk about the sales of a company that makes beanbag chairs, sir?

MR. BAXTER. Paul. Let me ask you a question. What does our company do?

JERRY. We make and sell computers, sir.

MR. BAXTER. That's right! We make and sell computers! You must be and very hard worker Paul! Do you work weekends?

JERRY. ...Sometimes, sir.

MR. BAXTER. Good. That's good...We make...and we sell...computers. And I don't know if you know this Paul...but computers are very hard to make. Have you ever tried to make a computer, Paul?

JERRY. Uh, no sir.

MR. BAXTER. Let me tell you...it's hard! They got all sorts of wires and chips. It's crazy! I mean its very complicated...I once tried to build a computer out of rubber bands and Vaseline...And you know what happened?

JERRY. No sir.

MR. BAXTER. It blew up! It blew up right in my face! And that's when I thought. I don't know a damn thing about computers. I don't even know who invented the computer. Do you know Paul?

JERRY. I think it was-

MR. BAXTER. Johnny Computer, exactly, that's what I thought! But you know what? We're wrong. It turns out there is no Johnny Computer...Or Philip B. Toaster...Or even an Albert H. Deodorant! These people don't exist! And that's when I thought about Santa Claus!

JERRY. Santa Claus, sir?

MR. BAXTER. Santa Claus. You know who I'm talking about right? Santa Clause big fat guy, red suit, comes once a year on...on...what is it?

JERRY. Christmas.

MR. BAXTER. Christmas! Now he's a fat man right? So that's when I thought...most fat people don't have any purpose in life. They don't! They just sit on their asses and eat all day. It's a fact! And that's when I thought...since they're not doing anything why not just let people sit on them.

JERRY. Oh god.

MR. BAXTER. Then I realized that wouldn't work...

JERRY. Of course...

MR. BAXTER. ...Because if little kids tried to sit on them...the fat people would eat 'em, right? So then I thought...instead of fat people...

JERRY. Use beanbag chairs.

MR. BAXTER. Close...Let the children sit on beanbag chairs and let the adults...sit on the fat people!

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MR. BAXTER. And then I thought of you!

JERRY. Me sir?

MR. BAXTER. I would like you to head up this division Paul!

JERRY. Sir, I must respectfully decline-

MR. BAXTER. Starting at 500k a year.

JERRY. Wha...?

MR. BAXTER. Wait better make it \$550, just to be on the safe side.

JERRY. On...the safe side...?

MR. BAXTER. And of course you'll need a new office.

JERRY. A new office?

MR. BAXTER. A corner office! With one, no *two* secretaries!

JERRY. Two secretaries?

MR. BAXTER. And an expense account!

JERRY. ...And keys to the executive washroom?

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JERRY. Oh...uh, that's great sir.

MR. BAXTER. So can I count on you, Paul?

JERRY. ...Sir, let me be the first to congratulate you on our new...beanbag chair/ fat people...endeavor.

MR. BAXTER. We're gonna be rich, Paul. Very, very rich.

JERRY. I hope so, sir.

MR. BAXTER (*Raises water glass for a toast*) Here's to business, Paul.

JERRY. To business. (*They toast*)

MR. BAXTER. Now where's the waiter with my buffalo?

JERRY. Uh, I had the buffalo, sir...

MR. BAXTER. Paul...did I ever tell you about the fourth rule of business?

(Lights down)

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