

THE STAIR

WRITTEN BY DARREN BREALEY

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THE STAIR

The age-old story of office politics, red tape and justification of jobs held by employees in power. Mr Green is the company boss. He meets Carson in the fire stairwell. It's lunch time, Mr Green is incredibly busy and the lift is broken. Through the two protagonists' conversation, we learn that the task of getting the lift repaired is anything but a simple one. Finding a simple solution via meetings, faxes, memos, voice mail and the trappings of bureaucracy couldn't be easier. Could it? The lift is stuck and we meet in the fire stairwell.

The Stair was first performed at the Workhouse Theatre, Melbourne, on 17 June 1998, with the following cast:

CARSON	<i>Tim Constantine</i>
GREEN	<i>Jamie Wilson</i>

Set in the 1980s, this medium to large business requires its strategies, procedures and policies to make it a smooth-running operation. With the trappings of bureaucracy and the good intentions of its staff, these suit-wearing, coffee-drinking Corporates find it difficult to see the trees for the forest. This scene takes place in the fire stairwell of a multi-story office building.

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CARSON is ascending the stairs. GREEN is descending the stairs. Carson holds office files.

CARSON: Mr Green.

GREEN: Carson. Why didn't you answer my call?

CARSON: Which call was that, Mr Green?

GREEN: The one I just made before.

CARSON: Before what, sir?

GREEN: Before I met you in this stairwell.

Pause.

CARSON: I'm on my way up to see you, sir.

Pause.

GREEN: Did you make an appointment? You need to make an appointment to see me. I'm a very busy man, Carson.

CARSON: Yes, sir.

GREEN: Did you make an appointment to see me, Carson?

CARSON: Yes, I did, Mr Green.

Pause.

GREEN: What did you want to see me about? I'm a very busy man, Carson, very busy.

CARSON: I made the appointment about these files.

GREEN: What about them?

CARSON: These files concern the last few meetings, with agendas, filed memos and copies of drafts of regulations.

GREEN: Why are you giving them to me?

CARSON: You asked for them.

Pause.

GREEN: Did I?

CARSON: Yes, sir.

GREEN: When did I ask for them, Carson?

CARSON: Last Wednesday, Mr Green.

GREEN: Why?

CARSON: These files are mainly about maintenance on the building and the executive floors, sir.

Pause.

GREEN: When did I want them by?

CARSON: Today, sir.

GREEN: Do you know why we're in the stairwell, Carson? Have you realised that I've come from six floors up? I have another three to go, if I'm to get to the ground floor. It's lunch hour, Carson, and I'm in a stairwell with you, I should be at the restaurant by now.

Pause.

CARSON: The lift is stuck, Mr Green.

GREEN: I know, Carson. What is maintenance doing about it?

CARSON: It has to be reported and filed, sir. I'll have the report sent to your desk by morning.

GREEN: My desk? What about today, Carson? I want to go to lunch *today*.

CARSON: Yes, sir.

GREEN: Who said reports for maintenance must go to my desk first?

CARSON: You did, sir.

GREEN: Why?

CARSON: For approval, sir.

GREEN: Who insisted I have a report about a stuck lift sent to me for approval?

CARSON: You did, sir.

GREEN: Did I?

CARSON: Yes, sir.

Pause.

GREEN: Why did I say that?

Carson searches through the files at hand and reads from an office memorandum.

CARSON: In last month's communication meeting, you asked for all maintenance reports to come to you first, for approval, to keep track of all maintenance costs.

GREEN: Did I?

CARSON: Yes, sir.

Pause.

GREEN: We must keep track of all costs, Carson. We can't go spending money willy-nilly. Accounts must be kept. The budget must balance, Carson. If I insist on approving all maintenance requests to keep the upper hand on all costs, then it must have been a good idea. Necessity is the mother of invention, Carson. We must improve our system, always. Not that the system is bad, we must be on the improve. Files, reports, are all part of keeping track of the system. We just can't merely exist, we must live and all be part of the system. Do you hear me, Carson?

CARSON: Yes, sir.

Pause.

GREEN: When can I expect the report on the stuck lift, Carson?

CARSON: You insisted that you have it today, sir.

GREEN: Well, where is it, man? I'm very busy, Carson. Lunch hour is nearly over, I haven't eaten and I'm stuck in the stairwell with you.

CARSON: Yes, sir.

GREEN: Do you have the report, Carson?

CARSON: I'll need to go to Stationery to get a fresh reporting book, Mr Green.

GREEN: Do you have a requisition form for me to sign?

CARSON: No, sir...

GREEN: No?

CARSON: Stationery Stores hours have been cut, sir, to save money. I can't fill out the form until three p.m. today, sir.

GREEN: Whose idea was it to cut hours?

Pause.

CARSON: Yours, sir.

GREEN: My idea?

CARSON: Yes, sir.

GREEN: Why?

CARSON: To save money on wasted man-hours.

GREEN: I suggested that?

CARSON: Yes, sir.

Pause.

GREEN: We can't afford to be wasting money on wasted man-hours. So much waste, Carson. It isn't good for the company to be wasting money. We can't afford to waste precious resources. Waste, Carson, is the decay of a healthy company. Throw away your money today, Carson, you're throwing away the economy of tomorrow. A wasted dollar is a wasted investment. With no investment, Carson, you can't grow, without growth, you have no way to build a better path – and with no path, you have no future and nowhere to go. Do you understand me, Carson?

CARSON: Yes, sir.

Pause.

GREEN: Carson, I want you to take a note.

CARSON: I don't have a pencil, sir.

GREEN: Here, borrow mine.

Green passes his pencil to Carson. Carson prepares to write.

GREEN: Ready? Have a requisition approved to request a reporting book, for maintenance to fix the stuck lift. Got that?

CARSON: Yes, sir.

Carson passes Green the pencil. Pause.

GREEN: What are you waiting for, Carson?

CARSON: You need to sign the request form, sir.

GREEN: What?

CARSON: You need to sign it, sir.

GREEN: Why?

CARSON: The women in Stationery will need to see your signature on the request to authorise the request, sir.

GREEN: Why's that, Carson?

***** Truncated *****

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