

**BOXES**

by

**Wendy MacLeod**

**CAST:**

MAN, a Visiting Assistant Interim Instructor

WOMAN, Assistant to the Assistant Associate Adjunct Provost

An officious-looking WOMAN sits behind a desk surrounded by boxes of various sizes, marked with generic office categories like: DIRECTIVES, REQUESTS, REQUISITIONS, REIMBURSEMENTS. One box has no label. MAN enters, carrying a large manila envelope.

WOMAN

Yes?

MAN

Is this the Office of the Assistant Associate Adjunct Provost?

WOMAN

Yes, I'm the Assistant to the Assistant Associate Adjunct Provost. How can I help you?

MAN

I'm here to turn in my forms...? The anonymous academic assessment of faculty forms?

The MAN hands her the envelope he carries. She pulls out a sample form, glances at it and puts it back. She hands the envelope back.

WOMAN

You can't turn these in yet.

MAN

But we got a directive about turning in our forms...

WOMAN

You're early.

MAN

But the directive said *sometime* before the end of the semester...

WOMAN puts her hands in a box marked "DIRECTIVES," pulls out a sheet and reads it to him.

WOMAN

You're supposed to have a student "administer and collect the forms *shortly* before the end of the semester."

MAN

I jumped the gun then?

WOMAN

You did.

MAN

Well, since the students have already filled them in I might as well leave them off...

WOMAN

You can't turn them in now! We haven't got a box!

MAN

A box?

WOMAN

A box! A box! To put them in!

MAN

What about that box?

WOMAN

That box is for Directives.

MAN

And this box...?

WOMAN

Requisitions.

MAN

Have you got any empty boxes?

WOMAN

Do you *see* any empty boxes?

MAN

Is that a box?

WOMAN

That box is being used.

MAN

It hasn't got a label!

WOMAN

That box is designated!

MAN

Maybe a folder...?

WOMAN

You can't use a *folder*!

MAN

Perhaps you could double up on a box...

WOMAN

Perhaps you could let me run my office as I see fit!

MAN

Of course! I didn't mean to...

WOMAN

The number of forms we get in here, if we started putting multiple forms in a single box, well you can imagine...

MAN

I just thought maybe we could *start* a box...

WOMAN

Well we can't!

MAN

Well when you do start a box would you be so kind as to put my forms in it? If I could just set them here *temporarily*...

MAN tries to set his envelope on her desk.

WOMAN

You can't leave those here!

MAN

You want me to take them away and then bring them back...?

WOMAN

*Shortly before* the end of the semester.

MAN

But the directive said we have to turn them in within 24 hours of administering the form!

WOMAN

You should have thought of that before you went off half-cocked! Distributing forms like so many strip joint flyers! Undermining the policies of this fine institution...

MAN

That certainly wasn't my intention...

WOMAN

Perhaps you thought you could pull a fast one, have the students fill out the forms half way through the semester, during the honeymoon period, before they've had a chance to sour on you, before they've failed an exam, been denied an extension, read the sarcastic comment in the margin...

MAN

(madly defending himself)

We had some time, I remembered the directive, I distributed the forms...!

WOMAN

You distributed the forms...?

MAN

No! A *student* distributed the forms!

WOMAN

Who collected the forms?

MAN

She did!

WOMAN

*She?*

MAN

It wasn't like that! She's very plain!

WOMAN

You didn't coax her into giving you a little peek? To get the lay of the land? To see which way the wind blows?

MAN

I followed the instructions to the letter! My hands never touched these forms!

WOMAN

But your hands *have* touched the envelope which holds these forms, haven't they?!

MAN

Isn't that allowed?

WOMAN

Assuming they don't get lost or misplaced or misfiled, the Assistant Associate Adjunct Provost will decide your future based on the forms you now hold in your hand...

MAN

I have nothing to fear! I'm on fire in the classroom! They follow me from course to course like so many ducklings!

WOMAN

But this early in this semester the students are undecided, they're nostalgic for the Mr. Chips they had *last* semester, they haven't *warmed* to you...in which case recession looms, poets are plentiful, academics adrift on the job market like so much flotsam and jetsam...

MAN

I was just trying to do my job! To follow the directive! A directive that wasn't, if I may say so, crystal clear!

WOMAN

Perhaps you'd like to speak to the Assistant Associate Adjunct Provost directly. He's always anxious to hear the complaints of non-tenured Visiting Assistant Interim Instructors!

She picks up the phone, threatening to punch the intercom button. Beat. The MAN leans in.

MAN

Why *don't* you call in the Assistant Associate Adjunct Provost? I think he'd be very interested to know that you *don't have a box!*

She hangs up the phone. He offers her the envelope. She snatches it from his hands bitterly. He waits. She drops it into the box without a label. He smiles in triumph, turns on his heels and walks out. She angrily scribbles a label and slaps it on the box: FORMS TURNED IN TOO EARLY.

END OF PLAY