

THE MEMO

A Play About Self-Worth
In Ten Minutes
by
Greg Vovos

CHARACTERS

JOE: A male typist in an office.

CHRIS: A male or female typist in an office.

MEMO PERSON: A male or female who delivers the memos and knows how to make an entrance and an exit.

SETTING

An office, more stringent than most. Two desks. Two rolling chairs.

TIME

8:59 a.m.

NOTE TO PRODUCTION TEAM

In order to make it clear where the prepositions have been removed from the characters' speech, the playwright has inserted _____ into the script. The underscores are there simply to provide clues to the missing words, not to suggest how the line be played.

In addition, words that are underlined are merely done so to show the rules that have been broken by the workers, not as a way to lead the actor to emphasize the line. Again, it's the actors and director's choices as to how to play this, of course.

The typing is very much a ritual for these characters. Listening to the dictation, typing and antagonizing each other are how they pass their days. Feel free to use ritual to point up the mundane aspects of their occupation in order to punch up the comedy and absurd.

Also, the playwright is not averse to a directorial choice of somehow displaying the memos for the audience to read, be it by projection or some other choice. This is by no means necessary, but merely stated so the artists feel free to create the memo world in a manner the director feels best serves the production. Preshow music can be replaced with a sound cue of one absurd memo after the next; contact the playwright if you would like a list of some possibilities. Thanks and have fun with THE MEMO!

TO PRODUCE THIS PLAY PLEASE CONTACT PLAYWRIGHT AT:

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Lights up as Joe sits in front of his keyboard getting ready to battle the day. After a moment, Chris rushes on and greets Joe.

CHRIS

(Cheerfully) Good morning, bastard!

JOE

Nothing changes.

CHRIS

Nothing changes until everything changes.

JOE

Does every day seem the same to you?

CHRIS

Today will be different.

JOE

How can you say that?

CHRIS

Because today is the day.

A bell rings and on cue like synchronized swimmers they perform their pre-typing ritual (which may include switching desks, putting on headsets and goggles, limbering fingers, stretching etc.) Once the ritual is over, the two workers type, type and type some more. They are expert typists.

Don't you find it ironic that the majority of honest, hard-working Americans feel politicians are crooked liars yet we still react in astonishment when we find out that they are the lying devils we thought them to be?

JOE

Yes. A bit.

CHRIS

Has anyone pointed this up? Anyone?

JOE

I don't think so.

CHRIS

Well, they should.

JOE

You're right. They should.

The Memo Person enters and in some sort of specific manner places the memos down for the workers to read; Memo Person then exits, just as he/she will after each delivery.

CHRIS

(Reading) "As of today, there will be no more talk of politics or pointing up of irony, political or otherwise."

This is ridiculous! Isn't that against the first amendment? Don't you find it ironic that our first amendment is being taken from us?

JOE

No.

CHRIS

You don't?

JOE

No comment.

CHRIS

Why must we follow these memos? They're borderline—

JOE

(Referring to what is coming through his headset.) He is spelling log for me. LOG! I know how to fucking spell log!!!!

The Memo Person walks by and drops off a memo. Chris snatches it up and reads it.

CHRIS

"There will be no use of the F-Word or any word beginning with F while on premises; that is not to say that the F-Word should not be typed if it is dictated to you, but it is not to be spoken aloud or used in any fashion unrelated to the work at hand."

JOE

What the hell does that mean?

CHRIS

I somewhat agree with this one. You do use the F-word a lot.

JOE

Screw you.

Memo Person walks by again with a new memo.

CHRIS

(Reading) “Any words used in the spirit of the F-bomb are also unallowed, but that is not to say that words used in the spirit of prepositions or other grammatical bridges beginning with the letter F are nonpermitted at this point.”

Nonpermitted? Is nonpermitted a word?

Joe types. He appears to be crying.

Joe, don't cry. You can get by without the F-bomb. I know you can. At least we still have prepositions! And when you think about it, there are not really a lot of words that begin with F that are of value anyway. I mean think about it.

Memo Person walks by. New memo.

(Reading) “There will be no thinking about it on company time, including but not limited to activities related to company pursuits.”

JOE

Why are you suddenly on the side of the memos? Just moments ago you were outraged by them, but now that they forbid me—

A BIG SIREN sounds. A voice proclaiming: “Siren 1 for Joe; 2 to Go.”

(Whispering) Now that they won't ALLOW me to use the F-bomb you agree because it furthers your agenda.

Another siren and Memo Person walks by and begins rolling Joe off stage.

CHRIS

Please, he didn't mean to say an F word. Give him one more chance. He's very good at what he does.

Memo person considers this. Gives Joe a warning stare and then pushes him back to his position and watches him intently until he begins to type.

Jésus, Christi, man. You have got to watch your mouth.

JOE

My point is as long as it PROGRESSES your ideals then you are all (*searches for word*) about the memo, but if not then you are—

CHRIS

You better watch yourself because you are bordering on irony, my (*almost says friend*) co-worker.

JOE

I'm not sure I was bordering on irony there. Not even close.

CHRIS

Do you even know what irony means?

JOE

Yes.

CHRIS

I don't think you do. If you did you would recognize that talking about irony while refusing to do so is--

JOE

I'm not fa—(*stops saying falling*) I refuse to be pulled into your maneuverings. Time to type.

Synchronized pre-typing ritual, they switch desks (not keyboards), type.

CHRIS

Would you have sex with the Memo Person?

JOE

Of course.

Memo Person walks on quickly, maybe seductively; drops off a memo.

(*Reading*) "There will be no talk of sex of any kind on the premises."

CHRIS

Why do you think the memo person refuses to talk?

JOE

Why must we go through this everyday? The memo person is a person; therefore, it is rude and dehumanizing to refer to the memo person as the "memo person."

CHRIS

But I don't know the memo person's name. I don't even know your name.

JOE

You did at one point.

CHRIS

At one point, sure. But not at this point. Not any longer.

JOE

I know your name.

CHRIS

What is it?

JOE

My point is that the memo person can at least be referred to by the possessive ‘their.’

CHRIS

Their?

JOE

Their.

CHRIS

You say that as if the memo person is more than one person, but the memo person is just one person.

JOE

Well, I refuse to say ‘its!’ The Memo Person is not a truck!

CHRIS

What are you driving at?

JOE

At least refer to the memo person if not by name then by what the memo person is.

CHRIS

The Memo Person IS the memo person!!!

JOE

A man is a man. And a woman is a woman. Man is he. Woman is she.

CHRIS

Hear her roar.

JOE

(Instructing) It is hers. It is his.

CHRIS

No talk of sex. You saw the last memo. For God’s sake!
SIREN.

JOE

Oooh. That’s your strike primero. Be careful. Watch your use of F words.

CHRIS

I’m getting confused by all these rules.

JOE

Referring to the memo person as he or she is not talk of sex. It is talk of gender. Gender is still allowed.

CHRIS
Is it?

JOE
Of course.
The memo person drops off a memo.

(Reading) "Talk of gender is still allowed, but only until noon."

CHRIS
What time is it anyway?

JOE
9:06.

CHRIS
Wow, this is a long day.

JOE
We should type.

CHRIS
True enough.
Pre-typing ritual, switch desks (not keyboards), and they type some more.

Do you ever think of making a contribution?

JOE
A contribution?

CHRIS
Yes. To society.

JOE
(Really confused) To society?

CHRIS
Yes. Leave a mark. Make a difference.

JOE
How would I make a difference?

CHRIS
By your work!
Joe laughs heartily at that one and another SIREN goes off.

That's two por vou!
JOE

Why?
CHRIS

Irony.
JOE

CHRIS
I am this close to walking out of those doors.
The memo person drops off another memo.

(Reading) "The use of prepositions is no longer permitted in the workplace; however, words such as *up* and *down* may still be used when they function as adverbs but not while functioning as prepositions. Prepositions include but are not limited to: *above, about, around, below, between, beyond, down, from, of, in, inside, out, outside, past, to*--which of course may still function as an infinitive--*with* and *within*. All Memos and Memo Persons are of course exempt from following the barring of prepositions."

JOE
That's a good memo. I have always thought prepositions to be excessive.

CHRIS
I couldn't disagree _____ you more _____ this. What time is it?

JOE
9:07.

CHRIS
9:07. And we both already have two sirens. We'll never make it.

JOE
I'll make us some coffee; that's what we need.
The memo person walks by with a new memo.

(Reading) "The consumption of coffee or any caffeine driven products is strictly forbidden by the company as its use has led to shaky fingers and sloppy work."

CHRIS
Are they saying that I make mistakes _____ my typing? I NO MAKE MISTAKES
_____ MY TYPING!

JOE
Sit down and calm yourself. Yelling will get you nowhere.

Silence.

(*Contemplating*) No coffee. That might lead us _____ dangerous waters.

CHRIS

Might? It's one thing that we can't use the F-bomb. But the lack _____ coffee will clearly lead _____ decreased productivity. So we're not even helping the company; or the company, I should say, is not helping itself _____ depriving us _____ coffee!

Chris pulls out a gun.

JOE

Jesus, Christ, put that gun away.

CHRIS

Why?

JOE

Because it opposes the rules.

CHRIS

No, it doesn't.

JOE

Yes, it does.

CHRIS

We never received a memo _____ pistols, handguns, crossbows, broadswords or any weapons _____ that matter.

JOE

Untrue. There was the paperclip memo.

CHRIS

Right you are. That was a peculiar memo.

JOE

And uncomfortable.

A shared moment of peaceful reliving of an uncomfortable past.

CHRIS

Nonetheless, no memos _____ guns.

JOE

Still, the gun is dangerous. Very dangerous. Life threatening, even.

CHRIS

I don't care.

JOE

Well, you can bet that there will be a memo _____ this weapon waving _____ any moment, my friend—

A siren. The biggest of all.

Ha. There it is. Just like I said.

The Memo person dances on and begins to wheel Joe away.

JOE

Hey, not me! I don't have a gun.

MEMO PERSON

Friend.

JOE

Did you just speak?

CHRIS

The memo person referred _____ you as a friend.

MEMO PERSON

No F-words. You are to be removed from the premises.

JOE

Do something, Chris.

CHRIS

You do know my name!

JOE

_____ course.

CHRIS

I am genuinely touched.

JOE

Great. Now do something.

CHRIS

What do you want me to do?

JOE

Shoot the Memo Person. You said today was the day.

CHRIS

I did, didn't I?

Chris shoots the Memo Person. The Memo Person collapses.

JOE

Oh, F--. Holy Shit! You killed the Memo Person.

CHRIS

I am done _____ the memos! I can think _____ myself!

They look at the body.

Do you think I did the right thing?

JOE

I don't know.

A pause devoid of cognitive activity.

CHRIS

What does the memo say?

Joe pulls the memo from the Memo Person's hand.

JOE

"Shoot the messenger."

CHRIS

I guess I did then.

JOE

That would make you an onward thinker.

They celebrate the moment. Maybe sprinkle memos on Memo Person.

CHRIS

What should we do now?

JOE

Let's type.

They sit down and begin the pre-typing ritual but stop midway through.

CHRIS

What will we type?

JOE

Does it matter?

They complete the pre-typing ritual and type in silence.

END OF PLAY