

TIED TO CONSISTENCY

15-DE04-W023

In a world that strives for consistency, joy is found in an unexpected place.

FADE IN:

EXT. FUTURE CITY - DAY

A light smog holds sway over rows of modern looking high-rise buildings that all have a striking degree of "sameness" to them. We slowly drift over and through the city.

SUPER:

In the not too distant future, scientists discover "perfection" in consistency. Standardization became the glorious end that all strove for, instead of being simply a means to an end. Many things fell by the wayside. Chief among them was joy. But it was not lost by all.

We end by focusing on the tallest building. The sole ornamentation on the building is its name: "MEGACORP."

INT. MEGACORP BOARD ROOM - DAY

In this modern conference room sits the 12 members of the Megacorp Board. In a world that preaches standardization, this is the ruling class.

They are all in their early 30's, dressed without exception in a dark suit (male and female alike). The men all wear the same solid-color NECKTIE, the women wear matching SCARVES.

The board members are all looking up at a clock above the door that reads 6:59 AM.

At precisely 7:00 AM in walks MRS. COLSON (60's), the stern leader and taskmistress of this organization.

During the meeting she is in constant motion, slowly pacing back and forth. Although there's a chair for her at the head of the table, she'll never sit in it.

MRS COLSON

We have a busy schedule today, so lets get started. Energy sector, report.

BOARD MEMBER #1

Yes Ma'am. All facilities operating at peak consistency. Profit margin is at seven point three two percent. Inter-facility variation is at zero point eight nine percent. Everything is in order.

Mrs. Colson nods approvingly at these numbers.

MRS COLSON
Transportation sector, report.

BOARD MEMBER #2
Yes Ma'am. All facilities
operating at peak consistency.
Profit margin is at seven point two
nine percent. Inter-facility
variation is at zero point four
three percent. Everything is in
order.

Mrs. Colson stops her pacing to directly face this bearer of good news.

MRS COLSON
Transportation, that is
outstanding. That's the lowest
inter-facility variation you've
ever reported. Keep up the good
work. After all, "science makes it
clear that consistency is best."
(Beat) Manufacturing sector report.

Mrs. Colson starts her slow pace again. Giving the manufacturing report is SAM DAVIDSON (30's), indistinguishable from the rest of the board.

SAM
Yes Ma'am. All facilities
operating at peak consistency.
Profit margin is at seven point
three one percent. Inter-facility
variation is at... at three point
eight zero percent. Everything is
in order.

There are several muted gasps around the table. Everyone turns to Sam at the mention of his variation number.

MRS COLSON
Three point eight percent Mr.
Davidson? Everything is most
certainly not in order. Explain.

Sam shifts uncomfortably in his chair.

SAM
Well ma'am, facility seventeen
seems to have experienced an
unexpected increase in its
productivity.

(MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)

Local management is investigating, but they haven't yet pinned down what's causing this upswing.

MRS COLSON

You know, we've worked so hard to minimize variation across all our product lines by rigorously enforcing standardization. There's no logical reason why things should be changing. I bet it's those "Joy Seekers" causing trouble again. They were never on-board with our standardization efforts.

SAM

We've only heard scattered rumors that any "Joy Seekers" remain. I can't imagine we'd find any working in our facilities. Local management has assured me that they're doing everything they can to--

MRS COLSON

I don't trust local management. Investigate it yourself and let me know if those troublemakers are popping up again. I'm counting on you to get to the bottom of this.

Mrs. Colson draws herself up to her full height while scrutinizing Sam for several uncomfortable seconds. She then resumes her slow pacing.

MRS COLSON (CONT'D)

Agriculture sector, report.

Sam squirms in his seat, tightening his necktie while only half-listening to the other reports.

EXT. GENERIC COMMUNITY - EVENING

Sam drives up to his house, which is identical to every other house on the block. This world has fully bought into the whole "consistency is best" motto!

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

This is a sparsely-decorated, post-modern dining room. Sitting at the table (which is set with bland looking food) sits MARY (30's), dressed in muted colors.

Also at the table is ABIGAIL (6), a bundle of energy and color. The rules of consistency and sameness that apply to the rest of the world haven't been drilled into her yet.

Mary serves the bland slop onto plates.

MARY

Anything interesting at work today?

Sam sighs.

SAM

I found out that I need to take a quick trip to one of the factories to investigate some variance.

Abigail looks confused.

ABIGAIL

Daddy what's "berryance"?

SAM

It's "variance" Abby. When things are all the same they work together better. After all, science makes it clear ...

Abigail knows this quote, as it gets drilled into everyone's head at a very young age.

SAM (CONT'D)

(overlapping)

... that consistency is best.

ABIGAIL

(overlapping)

... that consistency is best.

Mary looks a little exasperated that her daughter has already had this drilled into her sweet, innocent head.

SAM

That's right!

Abigail suddenly remembers something "Very Important."

ABIGAIL

Daddy! I made a gift for you. You can take it on your trip. Wait right there.

Abigail jumps down from the table and runs to get her "gift."

SAM
 (to Mary)
 A gift?

Mary shrugs her shoulders. She's as surprised by this as Sam is.

Abigail comes running back with all the enthusiasm of an excited 6 year old holding one of Sam's neckties. She has proudly scribbled all over it.

ABIGAIL
 See daddy? I drew you on your tie.
 Don't you just love it?

SAM
 It's (beat) very nice. Thank you
 Abby. I do. I do love it.

Abigail gives her dad a big hug. While hugging his daughter Sam gives his wife an exasperated look.

SAM (CONT'D)
 OK. Time to get ready for bed.

ABIGAIL
 OK Daddy. Kisses.

Sam reluctantly leans over to let his daughter kiss him. She then runs over to her mom, who welcomes her with open arms and a big smile, which seems to be rare in this world.

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)
 Kisses.

MARY
 Kisses.

After kisses Abigail turns and runs off to go get ready for bed.

Sam takes an exasperated look at his now-ruined tie, and throws it aside in disgust. Mary clears her throat to get his attention off of the tie and onto more important matters.

MARY (CONT'D)
 Third trip this month. How long
 this time?

SAM
 Hopefully not long. Mrs. Colson
 seems to think there may be some
 "Joy Seekers" showing up at one of
 the factories.

Mary is slightly shocked hearing her husband use the word "Joy Seekers," especially with the negative connotation he's putting on it.

MARY

I've never thought of Joy Seekers as causing any problems.

SAM

Well that's not what the company thinks, so off I go. You'll manage OK here while I'm gone?

MARY

We'll be fine. We'll just enjoy each day as it comes.

They finish their meal in silence.

INT. FACTORY FLOOR - DAY

There are 5 or so workers all dressed in identical overalls standing over a long workbench polishing WIDGETS.

Second from the right is GILL JONES (25), our "disruption" to the consistency of the facility.

Each worker has a pile of widgets to the left and to the right. Gill is whistling while he's polishing, which gets him occasional nasty glances from his coworkers.

Gill puts down one item and picks up another. 10 seconds or so later everyone else puts down an item and picks up another in unison.

Gill just continues to work and whistle when we hear overhead.

LOUDSPEAKER (O.S.)

Your attention please. Worker five nineteen, please report to the main conference room for evaluation immediately.

Gill puts down his widget and heads off.

WORKER

It's about time they did something about him.

There are nods of agreement from the other workers as they continue to work. Then one of the other workers starts to whistle a few notes.

Everyone stops to look at him. He quickly stops as they return to work.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Gill enters the conference room to find only Sam there, with a thick chart in front of him with Gill's name on it.

GILL
Mr. Davidson?

SAM
Gill. Please, have a seat.

Gill takes a seat while Sam opens the folder and looks through the various papers. Gill starts to whistle, which throws Sam off. He pushes the folder aside.

SAM (CONT'D)
Why do you do that? Why the whistling?

GILL
I've never really thought about it.
I guess I enjoy it.

SAM
"Enjoy." You know, we've spent billions trying to optimize and standardize every aspect of our lives. But your "joy" throws all of that off. We've never understood why you "Joy Seekers" don't just get with the program and get behind it like everyone else.

GILL
"Like everyone else?" You know, you and the rest are so busy chasing after consistency. You might as well be chasing after the wind. Nearly everyone here is miserable, but that's just not me.

SAM
You know, it's not supposed to be about you.

GILL
I know, I know. Look, I get that this is my lot in life, working here.

(MORE)

GILL (CONT'D)

But since it's where I've ended up,
I've decided to do good work, and
to find joy where I can.

Sam looks around at the dingy surroundings.

SAM

You can find joy here?

GILL

I do, actually. It's a choice.
Mostly little choices. And
sometimes, when there's no good
reason to feel joy, it comes
anyways. That's when I take it as
the gift it is.

SAM

Even though that joy is putting
your output at odds with everyone
else? Even putting you at risk?

GILL

Sir, I'm willing to do what I
believe to be right, even if no one
else agrees with me. Do with me
what you will.

Gill looks away for a moment, then starts whistling. Sam
straightens his tie while taking a good long look at Gill
trying to decide what to do next. This is not the
troublemaker he expected!

EXT. GENERIC COMMUNITY - NIGHT

Sam pulls back into the driveway coming back from his trip.
No one else is out and about at this late hour.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The table is set, and Mary is waiting for Sam when he comes
in.

MARY

Long flight?

SAM

As always. Abby's asleep?

MARY

She fell asleep on the couch
waiting. Dinner?

Sam sets down his luggage and sits at the table. He loosens his tie while Mary serves up some food then sits beside him.

MARY (CONT'D)

So, how did it go?

SAM

You know, I met my first "Joy Seeker" out at the factory.

MARY

What were they like?

SAM

He wasn't at all like I expected him to be.

MARY

Oh really?

SAM

Yeah. The strangest part was that I can't really disagree with anything he said to me.

MARY

So maybe they aren't as troublesome as you thought?

SAM

For having never met one before, I just didn't know.

Mary, looking at his loosened tie, removes it from his neck.

MARY

You know, there's a distinct possibility that maybe he wasn't the first.

She kisses him, and then walks off holding the tie. Sam looks at his wife with dawning realization in his eyes.

INT. KIDS BEDROOM - NIGHT

Creaking open the door, Sam looks upon Abigail as she's sleeping. He looks around the room, and he smiles for the first time in quite long time.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Sam is getting ready for the day. Looking in the mirror he finishes combing his hair.

SAM
(muttering to himself)
So it's a choice. Hmm. And
sometimes it's a gift.

While straightening his necktie (same one as in the beginning) he glances over and sees in the reflection the tie that his daughter presented to him before his trip.

INT. MEGACORP BOARD ROOM - DAY

We see the backs of the board members as they are all looking up at the clock. At precisely 7:00 AM Mrs. Colson walks in, just like always.

MRS COLSON
We have a busy schedule today, so
lets get started. Energy sector,
report.

BOARD MEMBER #1
Yes Ma'am. All facilities
operating at peak consistency.
Profit margin is at seven point
five six percent...

We hear someone whistling off-screen. Everybody stops and turns to see where this interruption is coming from.

It's Sam who has quite the happy countenance today. He stops whistling.

SAM
What?

Mrs. Colson opens up her mouth to start talking, but then pauses to stare at Sam with a confused look on her face.

We now notice for the first time that Sam is proudly wearing the scribbled-on necktie that his daughter gave him.

FADE OUT.

