

# THE FIERCE URGENCY OF NOW

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By Doug DeVita

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CHARACTER NAME	BRIEF DESCRIPTION	AGE	GENDER
Kyle	An angry young Art Director	30	M
Dodo	An old pro Copy Writer	70	F
Kate	A bitter Creative Director	40	F
Neil	An aging Account Executive	50	M
Meryl	An up and coming Copy Writer	32	F

TIME: October through June in the recent present.

SETTING: NYC, mostly.

### **SYNOPSIS:**

*The Fierce urgency Of Now* is a fast-moving comedy that follows art director Kyle as he tries to discover his real self amid the power struggles and skewed priorities of a high-powered New York ad agency. After an office restructuring puts him in a new creative group run by the megalomaniac Kate, he finds an unlikely ally in copywriter Dodo, a living-legend from the era of “Mad Men” who not-so-gently prods Kyle to the uncomfortable but inevitable realization that “It’s time to take off. And soar.”

This play is dedicated to the memory of Dolores (Dodo) Hanan, (1925 – 2013), an English teacher who became a copywriter, and used her skills to teach America that they spelled cheese K R A F T, pushed me to be all that I can be, and reached out and touched my heart.

### **DOUG DeVITA BIO:**

A two-time O’Neill Semi-Finalist (*Fable* and *Just A Rumor*), Doug’s other honors include: Semi-Finalist for Barrington Stage Company’s Burman New Play Award (*Phillie’s Trilogy*), Semi-Finalist for B Street Theatre’s New Comedy Festival (*Goddess Of The Hunt* and *Upper Division*), and Semi-Finalist for We Screenplay’s Diverse Voices Competition (*The Fierce Urgency Of Now*). In addition, he has won Fresh Fruit Awards of Distinction for Outstanding Play (*The Fierce Urgency Of Now*) and Outstanding Production (*Fierce...* and *Phillie’s Trilogy*.) Doug is currently an advisory board member for All Out Arts, and formerly an Artistic Director for Westside Repertory Theater. His work has been seen in New York, Los Angeles, Seattle, New Jersey, Connecticut, and London, and has been developed at the Kennedy Center in Washington DC (Mark Bly, Gary Garrison, Jacqueline Goldfinger, and Caleen Jennings), and at ESPA/Primary Stages in New York (Robert Askins, Rogelio Martinez, Winter Miller, and Michael Walkup). He has also studied with Karen Hartman, Jeffrey Sweet, and Eric Webb. A member of the Dramatists Guild, he has had work published by Smith Scripts UK.

### **PRODUCTION HISTORY:**

Workshop Production: Arouet, Seattle, WA, 2104

Developmental Reading: Abingdon Theatre Company, New York, NY, 2015

Workshop Production: The Fresh Fruit Festival, New York, NY, 2016

Reading: Schoolhouse Theatre Company, Croton Falls, New York, NY, 2019

RECOGNITION

**WINNER**

Outstanding Play

Fresh Fruit Award of Distinction

Outstanding Production

Fresh Fruit Award of Distinction

**SEMI-FINALIST**

We Screenplays Spring 2021 Diverse Voices Competition

The Fierce Urgency of Now 1.

Total darkness. Sound of a clock ticking. Fast. Then the sound of two men having sex. One stops.

NEIL

Wait.

KYLE

Is everything okay?

NEIL

No.

KYLE

What's the matter?

NEIL

I don't want to hurt you.

KYLE

You're not.

NEIL

No. You don't understand. I can't do this anymore.

KYLE

We can try something else, then.

NEIL

No.

KYLE

Really, it's okay.

NEIL

No. It's not, Kyle... it's really not okay. I can't do any of this anymore.

Projection: Kyle's Bedroom. 6:30 am, Sunday October 31st. Lights up on Neil, 50, and Kyle, 30.

KYLE

Oh. My. God. Neil? Are you breaking up with me?

NEIL

...

Yes.

KYLE

In the middle of sex?

NEIL

I'm sorry. I don't love you.

KYLE

But you said you did.

NEIL

I did. But I don't. Not the way you want, anyway.

KYLE

It really bothers you that I'm 30, doesn't it?

NEIL

It really bothers me that I'm 50. And... other things. So many other things. I think it's best we cool it now before I really do hurt you.

KYLE

Too late, Neil.

NEIL

We want different things, and it's not fair for me to keep lying to you.

KYLE

So you're breaking up with me in the middle of sex? You couldn't have waited until we'd finished your "goodbye, it's been fun, fuck you" bang?

NEIL

I'm sorry.

KYLE

You're an asshole.

NEIL

You're too upset to talk right now. I'll call you later, okay?

KYLE

Don't call me later, you stupid, lousy fuck. Just... go.

NEIL

I'm sorry.

KYLE

Stop saying that! You're not sorry, so just shut up and get the hell out of here.

Neil picks up a bag, puts it back down, and stares at Kyle as if he's about to change his mind. He doesn't, picks up his bag again and goes, taking out his phone as he leaves. Kyle throws something after him. It hits the wall as the lights change.

NEIL

Bev?... Sorry, honey, I didn't mean to wake you... yeah, I was able to catch the red-eye last night, I just landed. I'm getting an Uber now, I'll be home in a little while...

Sound of a clock ticking. Fast. Lights change. Projection: Kyle's office at Scalo, Weisbrot, Zazzi, & Hess. Later that morning.

Kate, 40, and Kyle.

KATE

I've never liked him. He's like a big black hole, ya know? I wish I'd known; I'd have told you not to get involved with him. It'll be okay, honey. Really. Maybe even better, ya know? Relationships take so much work for such little payoff.

Kyle sobs. Kate awkwardly hugs him.

KYLE

This is embarrassing. You must be so sorry you got stuck with me after Alan got laid off.

KATE

Oh, honey, no! When I got promoted and Scalo asked if I'd take you and Meryl on my team, I jumped at the chance! I love the work you two are doing on Marriott.

KYLE

Thanks for saving our asses, Kate.

KATE

Don't mention it.

(Lighting a cigarette.)

D'ya mind?

KYLE

Actually, Kate, I do.

KATE

Nasty habit. Really should quit. Can't help myself.

KYLE

And it's illegal.

KATE

It's Sunday. Call a cop.

KYLE

Kate, seriously, I'm allergic to smoke.

KATE

(Stubbing it out.)

You people and your goddamned allergies. Listen, sweetie, why don't you just go home?

KYLE

I'd rather just get ahead of myself for the week, you know?

KATE

Kyle, yeah, honey...

KYLE

I know I'm a little behind on that new stuff for Marriott, but Meryl and I have some really neat ideas to show you.

KATE

Kyle, just wait a minute, okay? There are some changes we need to discuss.

KYLE

Shouldn't we wait for Meryl to get here?

KATE

It's not about the work... It's... I hate this part of my job...

KYLE

You can't be letting me go! Are you?

KATE

Oh, honey, no! Nobody's getting laid off... this time. But... The Citibank account is moving into our group. I'm putting you on it, and putting Angela on Marriott.

KYLE

Kate, you know Meryl and I left J. Walter Thompson to get off Citibank.

KATE

Well, it's here now and we have it. It's just for a couple of months, until we get it running smoothly, then I'll see what I can do.

KYLE

Can't you give it to Angela and leave me on Marriott? You just said you love the work we're doing!

KATE

I know, honey, and I do! But Angela doesn't have any financial experience. And she can't handle both Benjamin Moore *and* Citibank, she's not senior enough for accounts that high volume.

KYLE

Wait a minute, Kate! You're not taking her off Moore and / giving it to me, too!?!

KATE

/ Moore is a fun account! Lots of good projects, some TV, / too.

KYLE

/ But Benjamin Moore is Neil's account!

KATE

I didn't know you two were fu... Shouldn't shit where ya work, didn't your mother ever tell you... oh, sorry. I forgot. Didn't your aunt ever tell you not to screw with account execs?

KYLE

Aunt Maryanne? Uhm, yeah, she used to eat account guys for lunch.

KATE

See? Creatives and Account Management? Mongoose/Cobra. Look, honey, if Neil gets out of line, you come to me, okay? We go way back, and I don't trust him as far as I could throw him.

(Taking a deep breath.)

One more thing, Kyle: I'm keeping Meryl on Marriott. She'll be Angela's writer now.

KYLE

But Meryl and I have been a team for six years!

KATE

I really had no choice, sweetie. It's coming from upstairs. From Scalo himself.

KYLE

So who's my writer now? You?

KATE

Oh, sweetie, I wish. No, we're getting some old fart from branding. Dolores... something or other.

KYLE

You're giving me that relic who's been here for 30 years? And Citibank!?! And Neil! I just can't... Goddammit!

He hurls his coffee mug, shattering it against a wall.

KATE

KYLE! Get a grip! November's gonna be crazy and December's gonna be worse. I need you to be up for it all.

KYLE

Sorry.

KATE

I know it's all a bit rough right now, but trust me, I've got your back. Look, why don't you just take the day to sort yourself out, try to relax a bit?

KYLE

Thanks, but I think I'll stay and finish this stuff for Marriott before I have to hand it over.

KATE

Kyle, you are officially off the Marriott account. This is probably the last Sunday before the end of the year I'll be able to let you take off. You know our motto: You work at Scalo, Weisbrot, Zazzi & Hess. You don't come in Sunday: Good luck and God Bless. So go. The new boss says it's okay. Go out for a nice dinner and put in a reimbursement form. I'll sign it. I'll even approve a scotch or two, okay? Or better yet, you live in the Village, right?

KYLE

Yeah.

KATE

Go to the Halloween Parade tonight. Party with the fa... fun people!

KYLE

If you say so.

Kyle reluctantly exits. Kate lights another cigarette, and makes a call.

KATE

Meryl? ... No, he's not taking it well at all. ... I just sent him home. He's had a rough night. Neil dumped him this morning. In bed, during, you know, and he just fell apart ... Oh. Shit. I thought you knew about them. Oops ... I need coffee before this Marriott meeting. Starbucks in ten? ... See ya there.

(Hanging up, she starts scrolling through  
Kyle's Marriott files on his computer.)

Shit. This really is good stuff.

Sound of a clock ticking. Fast. Lights change. Projection:  
Kyle's office. 9:30 am, Monday November 1st.

He's spritzing Bretheezy, a Febreze-like product.

KYLE

She just can't help herself.

Kate enters with Dodo, 70.

KATE

You know I made up the name Bretheezy, right? Got my first Clio for that campaign!

KYLE

Yeah, I heard.

KATE

Too bad I don't get royalties, huh? How you feeling this morning, sweetie?

KYLE

Okay, I guess.

KATE

Glad to hear it. Kyle, this is your new writer, Dolores. Dolores, this is your new art director, Kyle. Do I sense magic starting?

KYLE

I wouldn't call it "magic."

DODO

He's just darling, Kate. We'll be fine, won't we, Kyle-bird?

KATE

Good. Okay, we've got a Citibank status meeting in five minutes. FYI: Goldfarb goes nuts if anyone's even 30 seconds late. And we've got new project briefings for Moore in Neil's office at 11:00. Let the games begin!

Kate goes.

KYLE

Kyle-bird? We're on a nickname basis already? You work fast.

DODO

You have to in this business.

(Sizing him up, and smiling.)

If I'd realized it was you I was getting, I'd have laid in a supply of Pampers.

KYLE

And I'd have brought a year's worth of Depends.

DODO

(Laughing.)

Well gaga goo-goo to you, too.

KYLE

I've seen you in the elevators; I thought you work exclusively on AT&T brand advertising. What are you doing down here in "Relationship Marketing?"

DODO

Keeping my job, Kyle-bird.

KYLE

No offense, but if I were your age I'd be thinking of retiring.

DODO

You keep talking to me like that and you won't get to be my age, darling.

KYLE

Let's start over. Hi, I'm Kyle, your new partner.

DODO

I'm Dodo.

KYLE

I thought your name is Dolores?

DODO

Call me Dodo. Like the bird. Except I'm not extinct. Yet. You ever work on Benjamin Moore?

KYLE

Nope. You?

DODO

Years ago. Good client, lots of fun. Top shelf booze at their parties.

KYLE

How about Citibank?

DODO

Nope. But I worked on American Express for years. You?

KYLE

Yeah. At J. Walter Thompson. Crappy client, total hell. No booze. No parties.

DODO

Oh. That sucketh.

KYLE

Yes. It does "sucketh." I've heard horror stories about this Goldfarb.

DODO

Deirdre Goldfarb? All true.

KYLE

I thought you didn't work on Citibank?

DODO

She was a junior account wienie when we had the Amex business back in the late '80s.

KYLE

The '80s, huh? That makes you how old?

DODO

Never you mind. So you're the kid who was raised by Maryanne Gordon?

KYLE

My aunt. Well, my mother's aunt. You ever work with her?

DODO

Nope, but everyone in the business knows Maryanne Gordon was one of the best damn art directors ever.

KYLE

She would have agreed with you. Not a great parental role model, but when there's no one else... I'd rather not talk about it anymore if you don't mind. It's not that big of a deal.

DODO

"Big a deal." Not "big of a deal."

KYLE

What, are you a fucking English teacher too?

DODO

Most boring year of my life. And I don't like the F-word, Kyle, it makes you sound more ignorant than you really are.

KYLE

Duly noted.

DODO

Must've been tough growing up with "The Dragon Lady of J. Walter Thompson."

KYLE

She hated that nickname. But she kinda was.

DODO

I've never thought of her as the maternal type.

KYLE

She tried. Well, she got me into some really good boarding schools.

DODO

So she wasn't even an "Auntie Mame?"

KYLE

Who?

DODO

Classic movie with Rosalind Russell?

KYLE

Oh. I don't watch anything in black and white.

DODO

And you're an Art Director? Damn, I've got my work cut out for me.

Kyle's office phone rings.

KYLE

(Looking at the phone's ID bar.)

It's Goldfarb.

(Putting the phone on speaker.)

This is Kyle.

GOLDFARB'S VOICE

Hello, Kyle, this is Deirdre Goldfarb speaking. It is 9:58 am. The rest of us are waiting for you and Dolores in Conference Room 33B. I will cut you some slack today as we are starting a new working relationship, but you will please remember from now on my meetings start precisely at 10:00 am every Monday morning.

KYLE

We'll be right there.

GOLDFARB'S VOICE

I suggest you use the stairs rather than make us wait while you take the elevator.

KYLE

Duly noted.

GOLDFARB'S VOICE

You might want to put this as a recurring event with a reminder alert set for 9:50 / am...

KYLE

/ We're on our way.

(Hanging up on her.)

Jesus!

DODO

She was like that when she was 22. Let's take the elevator.

Sound of a clock ticking. Fast. Lights change. Projection:  
O'Lunney's, an Irish bar. 8:00 pm that night.

Meryl, 32, and Kyle, shooting darts.

KYLE

Have you seen the dinosaur I'm stuck with? God help us if we're still doing this when we're her age, Meryl. I can't believe Kate broke us up.

MERYL

I know!

KYLE

Want another bourbon?

MERYL

No thanks. Kate might not have had a choice. Did you talk to Scalo?

KYLE

Yeah. Joe's "happy to have us working here, we're all lucky to have jobs in this economy, Citibank is a new account and too important to trust with a less experienced art director..." blah, blah, blah.

MERYL

Kyle... There's something else we need to talk about...

Kyle's cell phone rings. It's the "Wicked Witch" theme.

KYLE

Shit. It's Goldfarb.

MERYL

You've given her your cell number?

KYLE

We have to.

MERYL

Christ! It's worse than JWT!

KYLE

Yeah...

(Answering.)

Hey, Goldfarb, what's up? ... Okay, okay, okay. Hello, Deirdre, how's it hangin'? ... I told you I'd be back at 9:00 to release the files. ... You don't have to wait for me, I'm perfectly capable. ... That's your choice, then. ... Fuck off, Goldfarb!

He disconnects.

MERYL

(Sticking a dart in the center of the board.)

And there it is! Deirdre Goldfarb's first "Bullseye" from Kyle.

The phone rings again. He ignores it.

KYLE

Third. All that stuff we've heard about her? It's worse. And there's a new client at Citibank. Her name is Anita, and she makes every other Citi-Wanker we worked with look like a Disney Princess. She doesn't even want us "in her presence;" only Deirdre can be in the room with her. We have to present everything via conference call.

MERYL

Yikes!

KYLE

At least it saves us trips out to Queens. I guess I should go back.

MERYL

Yeah, before you go, I need to / tell you

The phone rings yet again. He ignores it again, but turns to go.

KYLE

She's going nuts. Tell me at lunch tomorrow.

MERYL

Uhm... no. I can't this week at all.

KYLE

Then drinks next Monday?

MERYL

No, I can't next week either.

KYLE

But we always take a break to drink and dart on Monday. They can't stop us from that.

MERYL

Yeah, Kyle, listen... Marriott is sending Angela and me to Europe and Asia for the next couple of months. Researching international properties for a new campaign.

KYLE

You mean *our* new campaign.

MERYL

Look, wouldn't you rather hear it from me than finding out after we've gone?

KYLE

Yeah, yeah, sure. Thanks for telling me.

MERYL

I can't help thinking if you didn't insist on taking the train every time we went down to DC for Marriott meetings...

KYLE

I get it, Meryl. I've never wanted to go to Europe anyway. And I hate Chinese food.

MERYL

I don't like this anymore than you do, Kyle. And for the record, I'm hurt you never told me about Neil.

KYLE

Kate shouldn't have said anything to you.

MERYL

She thought I knew. I mean, I thought we tell each other everything.

KYLE

Almost everything. Don't say anything to anyone.

MERYL

You know you can trust me.

KYLE

When are you leaving?

MERYL

Tomorrow afternoon.

KYLE

Maybe you should start packing.

MERYL

Yeah. Maybe I should.

KYLE

I have to go proof and release those files. Have a nice trip.

He exits, still holding a dart.

MERYL

Kyle? Wait!

(Shouting after him.)

Grow up, Jerk-Face!

KYLE (OFF)

Shut up!

Sound of a clock ticking. Fast. Lights change. Projection:  
Kyle's office. 10:45 pm, that night.

Neil enters.

NEIL

Knock knock knock. Still here, kiddo?

KYLE

Yes.

NEIL

Working on my stuff?

KYLE

No. Stuff for Goldfarb.

NEIL

You handled yourself well this morning.

KYLE

I can work with you. If I have to.

NEIL

No F-bombs. Impressive.

KYLE

You knew I was being put on your account, didn't you? That's why you dumped me.

NEIL

Yes, I knew. And no, that's not why I broke up with you.

KYLE

It could work, Neil, it could. We've been discreet, no one knows.

NEIL

Kate knows.

KYLE

She guessed. And she's promised to keep it secret.

NEIL

And has she?

KYLE

(Quietly.)

She thought Meryl already knew.

NEIL

(Picking up the dart from Kyle's desk and aiming towards Kyle's forehead.)

Bullseye. Those two are getting too close, too fast, if you want my opinion.

KYLE

I don't.

NEIL

I'd watch my back if I were you. Kate only kept you after Alan was laid off because she wants Meryl, and you guys are a package deal.

KYLE

Not anymore, we're not.

NEIL

See?

KYLE

She says she doesn't have a choice, that it's coming from Scalo.

NEIL

And what did Joe say about that?

KYLE

Who said I talked to Scalo?

NEIL

I know everything that goes on around here, Kyle. And as for Kate: you've only been working with her a few weeks; I've known her for 10 years. Trust me, she's piled up a lot of bodies over the years.

KYLE

I don't believe you.

NEIL

You don't want to believe me.

KYLE

I have to get these files released. Goldfarb is waiting for me to finish.

NEIL

She would be. Take a car home. Charge it to Moore.

KYLE

Kate gave me a voucher already.

NEIL

Remember what I said about her.

KYLE

Why do you care?

NEIL

I'm not heartless, Kyle.

KYLE

Duly noted.

NEIL

Yesterday morning, all I could see when I looked into your eyes is an sweet young man, dreaming about the white picket fence, the cozy little house, the dog, the life he's never had... it all became more than just a bit of fun. And that scares the crap out of me.

KYLE

Jeez, Neil, you can't even call it what it is? Maybe all I want is a fuck buddy too, did ya even think about that?

NEIL

You're also falling / in love

KYLE

/ No, I'm / not.

NEIL

/ You're falling in love with a version of me that doesn't exist. I like you Kyle, you're a wonderful lover, and a great kid. But I don't want any more kids.

KYLE

Who said anything about wanting kids? Or a cozy little house with a white picket fence? You really don't know me, do you?

NEIL

Do you really know yourself, Kyle? I'm sorry I ended it, and I'm sorry I ended it the way I did.

KYLE

Yeah, right.

NEIL

I care about you, Kyle, and because I care I have to tell you to watch yourself around Kate. She's a mother, but not the kind you want her to be. Do not be taken in by that "Earth Mother" thing she's got going on. She's Mother Earth after the toxins have seeped deep into her soil.

KYLE

Would you please go?

NEIL

Don't say I didn't warn you.

KYLE

And just why the hell should I trust you?

NEIL

I can't think of a reason in the world why you should right now.

KYLE

(Taking the dart, he aims at Neil's heart.)

Bullseye.

(Waving Neil out of his office, he picks up the phone.)

Hey Goldfarb, I just sent the files to production... Whaddya mean you wanted to see them again? You've already proofed them twice!...

Neil exits.

Sound of a clock ticking. Fast. Lights change. Projection: Kyle's office. 11:45 am, Tuesday December 21st.

Kyle is on the phone.

KYLE

... Whaddya mean, it's my responsibility? ... No, Goldfarb, you push back ... Your client's been sitting on this job since before Thanksgiving, she's blowing the schedule, not me ... So what? It's a stupid credit card acquisition package ... So it goes to production a day late. It goes to the printer a day late. It goes to the post office a day late. It gets delivered a day late. It goes in the trash a day late. Who cares? ... I am not working Christmas Eve or Christmas day. Not for you, not for Anita, and not for Goddam Citibank ... You really think Moo Shoo Chicken is an incentive? What is wrong with you? ... Fuck off, Goldfarb.

He slams the phone. Meryl enters, carrying a gift box.

MERYL

Isn't this where I left?

KYLE

Eighth time in seven weeks I've told her to fuck off. Welcome back, bitch!

MERYL

God, I never thought I'd say this, but I miss working with you, Jerk-Face.

KYLE

Working with "Saint Angela of The Font of Helvetica" getting boring?

MERYL

She's not you, that's for sure.

KYLE

Kate certainly loves her. How was the trip?

MERYL

Exhausting. But thank you for the care packages. Here. It's not much, but Merry Christmas.

Kyle opens the box and takes out a coffee mug.

KYLE

Cool. They have a Starbucks in... Fuck It ?

MERYL

Phuket (*Pronounced Poo-ket.*) Now don't break it the next time you have a temper tantrum. This can't be replaced downstairs.

KYLE

Duly noted. Thanks!

MERYL

So... Could you do me a favor and put our Marriott files back on the hard drive?

KYLE

Why?

MERYL

Angela needs them.

KYLE

No. Those are my designs.

But it's my copy.

KYLE

So, use your copy, I don't care. But Angela isn't using my work to pass off as hers. She can come up with her own golden shit.

MERYL

(Gently.)

Look, Kyle; I know it's December 21st, but I really hate when you get like this.

KATE (OFF)

KYLE!

KYLE

Oh, shit. Right on time.

KATE

(Shouting as she barges in.)

You have got to stop telling Deirdre Goldfarb to fuck off!

KYLE

She's an idiot, Kate, she can't control her client.

KATE

I know, but you can't keep telling a VP to fuck off, honey. That's my job.