

The Women in My Office

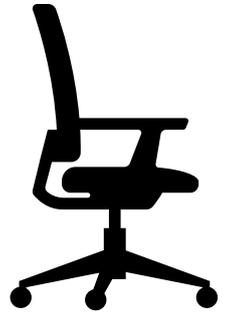
PILOT

written by
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25th of June 2020
Fifth Draft

Made in Highland

Lewisham Sixth Form College
Admin Office



Margaret's
Office

Filing System

Office
Entrance

Jan

Yasmin

Tara

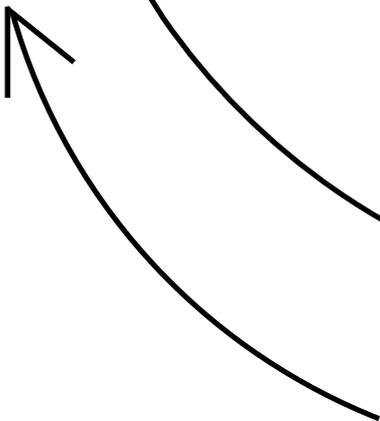
Viktorija

Lulu

Photocopier

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Hallway to Staff Kitchen



EXT. COLLEGE. NIGHT.

Three young men in hoodies and hats approach the gate of LEWISHAM SIXTH FORM COLLEGE. The LEADER fumbles in his pockets and pulls out a A KEYCARD. He beeps the gate open, the two others follow. THEY EACH CARRY A LARGE DUFFEL BAG.

MAN 1

What is this place? A school?

MAN 2

Sixth Form, innit.

THEY WALK THROUGH THE CAR PARK towards the main building.

MAN 1

Oh yeah, shit I think I went here!

MAN 2

What d'you mean, you *think* you went here, bruv? That's something you should know.

MAN 1

Shuttup. I only went for a bit, innit. And it's dark!

MAN 2

It's dark inside your mind, cuz. For you are uneducated.

LEADER

Shh! There he is.

A FIGURE appears in the blackness. A WHITE MAN IN A GREY SUIT, his face unclear.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. COLLEGE. EARLY MORNING.

THE EXACT SAME SHOT in the mundane light of day. NOBODY AROUND.

CUT TO:

INT. COLLEGE CANTEEN. EARLY MORNING.

A SOLITARY FEMALE CLEANER hunches over a bin bag and works her way with Sisyphean slowness through a sea of teenage rubbish. The more she picks up, the more we see that there is.

TITLES: THE WOMEN IN MY OFFICE
over...

SHOTS OF THE COLLEGE, chillingly empty: long hallways of abandoned blue carpet, chunks of writing un-erased on the whiteboards ('EASTER HOMEWORK' etc), notes passed in class now lying like dead flowers on the floor, cold April light sliding in under half-closed blinds.

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INT. THE WOMEN'S ROUTINES, MONTAGE. EARLY MORNING.

AN ALARM CLOCK READS 6:25. YASMIN, 20, ADMIN ASSISTANT, petite and pretty in cute pyjama shorts, wakes in a single bed in a girly pink bedroom. HER 9 YEAR-OLD HALF-SISTER sleeps in a nearby bed. The room is crammed with toys, clothes, scrunchies and everything else. YASMIN STRETCHES AND HOPS OUT OF BED, genuinely excited to meet the new day.

CUT TO:

YASMIN APPLIES SEVERAL LAYERS OF MAKEUP in front of a small mirror in the bathroom. She has her phone set up on a tripod and is FILMING HERSELF for her Youtube channel:

YASMIN

...So yeah I like to work the foundation in with a beauty blender, just to get a more fuller coverage. But you can totally use your fingers...

Yasmin's battered old BLUETOOTH SPEAKER starts playing (something like) 'MAMA SAID' BY THE SHIRELLES (look it up, you won't regret it) which continues over the rest of the MONTAGE:

CUT TO:

A HOUSE, bigger, nicer. An oven clock reads 7:05. JAN, 44, FINANCE OFFICER, skinny and bespectacled, dressed ready for work, removes A TRAY OF GORGEOUS-LOOKING MUFFINS from the oven in her spotless kitchen. Not quite ready. She puts them back, SETTING THE TIMER FOR 2 MINUTES 35 SECONDS.

CUT TO:

AN ALARM CLOCK READS 7:15. TARA, 50, SENIOR ADMIN ASSISTANT overweight with an unwisely short haircut and polkadot pyjamas, SITS IN BED WITH EYES CLOSED. The sound of a babbling brook comes from her phone, the screen reads 'ACCEPTANCE MEDITATION (WATER SOUNDS)'

VOICE

--And it's natural to feel your attention drifting to sounds, thoughts... Simply come back to your breath, a white light flowing--

Suddenly, a SHRILL VOICE cuts through--

TARA'S MOTHER (O.S.)

Tara? TARA!

TARA

YES, MUM! ONE MINUTE!!

CUT TO:

YASMIN makes breakfast for her little sister, JASMIN, 9. MUM, 40, smokes outside in the garden, arguing loudly on the phone.

YASMIN'S MUM

(muffled)

No! I'm supposed to stay on
Universal Credit til the end of
the--! I DON'T live with him! I
CAN'T GET RID OF HIM--!

Yasmin, tuning out her mum's anger, DEPOSITS A PLATE in front of her sister: WHITE BREAD NUTELLA SANDWICH WITH CRUSTS CUT OFF. She then sits down to eat the exact same thing herself, along with coffee in a pink unicorn mug and a bottle of Boots 'HAIR, SKIN & NAILS VITAMINS'.

She picks up her phone and SCROLLS THROUGH INSTAGRAM. A photo of a YOUNG HANDSOME MAN POSING TOPLESS in front of a mirror: #abs #dedication. She pauses. Her thumb hits the LIKE button. Shocked, she puts a hand to her mouth. Why did she do that? A NOTIFICATION POPS UP in her DMS. SHE SLAMS THE PHONE DOWN.

CUT TO:

A CAR DASHBOARD CLOCK READS 7:45. VIKTORIA, 33, RECEPTIONIST, a statuesque Ghanaian immigrant, drives her second-hand car. In the back are HER 7 YEAR-OLD TWINS, alternately whispering and fighting. In the passenger seat sits WISE, 10, HER NEPHEW, his big soft eyes glued to his iPad. VIKTORIA looks immaculate as always, long nails curled around the zebra steering wheel.

The twins begin HISSING AT EACH OTHER, playing wild animals.

VIKTORIA

Stop it, girls! Not nice!

Stopped at a traffic light, she TAKES A SQUIRT OF HAND-SANITISER from a bottle stationed on the dashboard and rubs it in carefully. This has a VISIBLY CALMING EFFECT on her.

CUT TO:

JAN PLACES EACH OF HER MUFFINS INTO A LARGE TUPPERWARE BOX. She takes ANOTHER BOX out of her fridge, looks inside. WE CAN'T SEE WHAT IT IS, BUT SHE IS BEAMING. She picks up her bag and car keys, then the two boxes, but something calls her back. SHE ENTERS THE CONSERVATORY behind the kitchen to find A SMOKE FILLED POKER DEN.

Two of her four TWENTY-SOMETHING SONS sit there with a handful of friends. They've clearly been up all night: red eyes, takeaway cartons, ashtrays, weed grinders and rolling papers.

JAN

Hi boys.

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A FEW GRUNTS in reply.

JAN

Jamie, you know your dad is working nights, yes?

JAMIE

So am I, innit.

THE OTHERS CACKLE. He grins.

JAN

So he's going to be sleeping when he gets back and will need quiet. Okay?

JAMIE SHRUGS. Jan takes it as a yes. She retreats. As she opens the front door to leave, VERY LOUD MUSIC SUDDENLY BOOMS from the conservatory.

CUT TO:

VIKTORIA DEPOSITS HER KIDS AT THE SCHOOL GATE. The two girls run to their friends, Wise is still on his iPad even as he walks. Across the road, Viktoria SPOTS A MAN WATCHING HER.

CUT TO:

TARA PUTS A PLATE OF POACHED EGGS AND TOAST in front of her ELDERLY MOTHER, who lies in bed and has clearly been there for years. Tara's mother looks at the food with a grimace.

TARA'S MOTHER

I can't eat that.

TARA

You eat it every day, mum.

TARA'S MOTHER

I couldn't possibly eat a thing!

TARA SIGHS and opens the blinds. The room smells of decay.

TARA'S MOTHER

It happened again last night, people coming into my room--

TARA

Okay...

TARA'S MOTHER

They didn't see me. They thought I was just a thing. Nobody sees me...

Tara looks out at the beige-gold suburban morning and takes a deep breath.

CUT TO:

VIKTORIA ARRIVES AT WORK.

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The BORED SECURITY GUARD lifts the traffic arm with BARELY A LOOK AT HER. She parks and walks through the car park to the revolving glass doors. Inside, she USES HER KEYCARD to access the admin office.

INT. OFFICE. MORNING.

THE ADMIN OFFICE is an awkwardly shaped little triangle behind the MAIN RECEPTION (see map). 4 desks, 3 large filing cabinets, and a photocopier jostle for position along with stacks of papers and old Christmas cards. 5 mugs sit next to some old Hobnobs on a dirty shelf.

VIKTORIA goes straight to the phone and presses MESSAGES. Slowly, the computerised voice begins to talk. Suddenly, the SOFT THUD OF A CAR DOOR SHUTTING. She sees TARA ARRIVING outside. VIKTORIA SWIFTLY HITS A SERIES OF KEYS.

VOICE

All messages erased.

Viktoria plops her handbag down on the reception chair and looks at the desk.

CLOSE UP: A FEW CRUMBS on the Reception desk.

INT. OFFICE KITCHEN/ CORRIDOR. MORNING

TARA TAKES A STRAWBERRY WEIGHT WATCHERS YOGHURT out of the fridge, grabs a spoon and WALKS DOWN THE CORRIDOR, back to the office where she finds VIKTORIA, CLEANING THE DESK.

TARA

So d'you have a nice weekend? Oh
my God, let me tell you WHO I
SAW--

TARA OPENS THE YOGHURT. Viktoria watches (in slo-mo) as A FLECK OF PINK YOGHURT escapes and falls in a perfect arc ONTO THE CLEAN DESK. VIKTORIA LITERALLY SEETHES, Tara is oblivious.

EXT. COLLEGE CAR PARK. MORNING.

YASMIN ARRIVES AT WORK, peppy and awake, dressed in a cute little leather jacket that barely covers her shoulders, and Gucci handbag.

JAN APPEARS BEHIND HER, few metres away.

JAN

Yasmin!

YASMIN TURNS, her key card raised. She waits, smiling at Jan who jogs up to her carrying her TUPPERWARE OF MUFFINS as well as the other box beneath it.

JAN

(chuckling)

'Fraid I need your help as usual.

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Yasmin smiles and holds the door open for her.

INT. OFFICE. MORNING.

A TIMESTAMP READS 9.01am.

YASMIN AND JAN ENTER THE OFFICE and repair to their respective desks. Viktoria is answering phones, Tara is sat at her desk, flicking through the Mail Online.

YASMIN

Where's Lulu?

INT. LULU'S ROOM.

A PHONE ON THE FLOOR NEXT TO A MATTRESS ON THE FLOOR READS 9:10. LULU, 24, ADMIN ASSISTANT, a red-haired tomboy hipster, blindly reaches out, knocking over a quarter-full can of beer.

LULU

(seeing time)

Fuck shit cunt.

A LUMP under the duvet next to her starts TALKING.

LUMP

Told you to set an alarm. You were drunk. I was very responsible.

LULU

(pulling off duvet)

Hey! At least I'm still in my clothes.

THE LUMP EMERGES. A girl, ANDREA, 23, topless.

ANDREA

We still didn't sleep together?

LULU

(getting up)

I'm working on it.

ANDREA

(grabbing her ankle)

Why do you have a job!? Stay!

LULU

(shoving shit into her satchel)

Sorry babe, that new filing system isn't going to implement itself.

ANDREA YAWNS AND STRETCHES luxuriously, showing off her perfect body and virile tufts of dark armpit hair.

LULU WATCHES, TEMPTED. She sniffs and then drinks from an old cup of coffee she finds on a shelf.

ANDREA

Yeah, well, I have to be up soon too. I'm having coffee with that gallery guy at *eleven thirty*. Ugh.

Andrea rolls over and grabs LULU'S LANYARD from the floor. Her ELECTRONIC KEYCARD features a photo, her name and 'LEWISHAM SIXTH FORM COLLEGE'. ANDREA LAUGHS, remembering something.

GIRL

Those women are so hilarious. Will you post something today?

LULU GRINS, she takes the lanyard from Andrea and throws it around her neck.

LULU

(sarcastic)

Things are usually so hectic, I dunno if I'll have time...

INT. OFFICE. MORNING.

A TIMESTAMP READS 9.35am.

GREY BOREDOM already stifles the air. JAN squints at her computer, VIKTORIA examines her nails. YASMIN carries large cardboard boxes containing stacks of paper to the office's central table. They look pretty heavy but no one is helping her. TARA ENTERS, talking rapidly.

TARA

So Margaret is leaving in order to catch her train at three and she wants--

JAN

Muffin? Raspberry and white choc chunk.

Tara frowns, but takes a muffin.

TARA

--AND she's wants the new filing system being put into effect prior to that departure. Meaning hers.

Yasmin gratefully takes a muffin, placing it on her desk for later. Viktoria refuses a muffin. Jan isn't eating any herself.

JAN

Ooh she's going to have a lovely time in Wales, isn't she?

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Phone RINGS.

VIKTORIA
Hello, Lewisham Sixth Form
College.

TARA
You know, my step-father was
Welsh.

JAN
Really?

Yasmin continues shifting the boxes alone.

VIKTORIA
I'm afraid the college will be
closed until next term.
(hissing whisper)
Call me on my mobile. I told
you--!

She HANGS UP.

LULU ENTERS, a bike helmet and a beaten-up rucksack on top of
an old denim jacket. She IRONICALLY SALUTES Viktoria at
Reception, who doesn't respond.

YASMIN
I've never been to Wales, but I
went to Devon on a school trip
and it was SO rainy, ohmygod.

JAN OFFERS LULU A MUFFIN before she's even taken her jacket
off. She declines.

TARA
You know, it's not as rainy there
as people think.

JAN
Really!?

LULU MAKES AN IRONIC FACE AT YASMIN on the way to her desk.

LULU
Scintillating...

JAN
So have you been there a lot?

TARA
Well, I haven't... actually been.
But I went to see Cindy Bassey in
concert with him once. She sang
the James Bond song. My step-
father absolutely loved it.

LULU
Is Cindy Bassegy related to
Shirley Bassegy, Tara?

VIKTORIA'S MOBILE RINGS. She quickly takes it outside. ONLY
YASMIN TAKES NOTICE of Viktoria's unusual, frantic behaviour.

TARA
You're late, Lulu. Doesn't
reflect well.

LULU
On what?

TARA
On you. And yourself.

Lulu sits down at her desk. It's the one in the corner, the
only desk not connected to any others.

LULU
Me. And myself. Okay.

Lulu takes her headphones off her neck and yanks open her
DESK DRAWER. She stops. Inside is A PACKET OF PISTACHIO NUTS
WITH A POST-IT attached. It reads *Have a nibble on me!*
LULU LOOKS UP TO SEE JAN BEAMING AT HER.

JAN
I know you don't like cake. And I
saw you eating nuts last week at
lunch--

LULU
Thanks, Jan. That's very nice and
not disturbing.

Jan hovers. Lulu whacks the drawer shut. Jan backs off. Lulu
opens Twitter.

TARA
Okay, Ladies! I've got inventory
to get to--

Lulu makes a sarcastic 'wow' face at Yasmin, who giggles into
her sleeve. Tara catches this, but continues.

TARA
I was just telling everyone,
Lulu, that the new filing system
MUST be put in place, prior to
the merger with the new branch
next term, of which you know The
Head is very invested as a
personal project. Speaking of
which, Lulu, I need you to get on
that supply order right--

VIKTORIA RE-ENTERS.

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VIKTORIA

Lulu, Margaret wants to see you
in her office.

EXT. FLOWER STALL, LEWISHAM. DAY.

It's the MAN FROM YASMIN'S INSTAGRAM FEED. SONNY, 20, a tall, handsome but slightly seedy looking boy, is TALKING TO A FLOWER-SELLER.

SONNY

Yeah, she's classy, you know?
It's gotta say class, but also
sexy. You get me?

FLOWER SELLER

Pink Daisies?

Sonny pauses, looking carefully at the daisies.

SONNY

You've fucking *smashed* it, cuz.
How much?

SMASH CUT TO:

SONNY SPRINTS AT BREAK-NECK SPEED down a side street,
clutching the stolen flowers.

EXT. COLLEGE CAR PARK. MORNING.

VIKTORIA TAKES ANOTHER CALL ON HER MOBILE.

We can distantly hear her ARGUING with someone, though the words are muffled as we zoom back to the office and see JAN AND YASMIN NOSILY WATCHING through the atrium window.

A TIMESTAMP READS 10.13am.

YASMIN

What do you think it is? The
twins?

TARA ENTERS, in a flap, holding a sheaf of papers.

TARA

These inventories! I think there
might be issues regarding them!

YASMIN AND JAN GET BACK TO WORK, they both know it's best not
to encourage Tara by asking questions.

MARGARET (O.S.)

'Senior Admin Assistant believes
that Greek yoghurt is just
yoghurt with honey in. Is now on
racist tangent about Greeks. Will
update as we go.'

INT. MARGARET'S OFFICE. MORNING.

MARGARET, 60, IS THE OFFICE MANAGER and really looks like one. Straight white hair frames a humourless face above a post-menopausal outfit of mauve nylon folds and shapeless trousers.

LULU SITS ACROSS FROM HER, looking slightly embarrassed. Margaret reads from a sheet in front of her:

MARGARET

'Finance Officer wants to know if she could bring in 'a special cake' for me. Problem is I would rather go blind--'

LULU

It's my personal account--

MARGARET

Lulu, it's Twitter. I'm afraid this does breach the code of conduct and--

LULU

Okay, but FYI I have two weeks of holiday so I should get that paid forward and--

MARGARET

You're not fired, Lulu.

Suddenly, A SHARP KNOCK on the door, followed by TARA'S HEAD.

TARA

Margaret, sorry. I need to speak to you about an inventory issue when you have an appropriate moment, if possible. Also you should probably let the others know who will be in charge this week. I.e.--

MARGARET

I will talk to you about this at the end of the day, Tara.

TARA

I'll pencil that in. Great. Thanks.

INT. OFFICE. MORNING.

A TIMESTAMP READS 10.25am (from here noted in scene headings) Through the window, we see VIKTORIA ON HER WAY BACK in from the car park.

CUT TO:

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JAN
 (beckoning to Yasmin)
 Psst! Come and have a look at
 this.

She opens a drawer in her desk and reveals what's in the box she brought from home: AN ORNATELY DECORATED CAKE.

YASMIN
 Wow!

JAN
 You know it's Viktoria's
 citizenship anniversary? I told
 Philip to come and surprise her
 with the girls at the end of the
 day. A little surprise party! You
 know, like we had for Tara's
 engagement.

Jan beams. Yasmin looks confused.

YASMIN
 But... Viktoria never ever... How
 did you get Philip's number?

JAN
 (mischievous smile)
 Emergency contact!

YASMIN
 (creeped out)
 Oh... Jan.

VIKTORIA RETURNS. Jan hurriedly hides the cake. Yasmin sings softly and nonchalantly. TARA RETURNS, out of breath.

TARA
 Yasmin, I'd like you to laminate
 some more of those security
 signs. People are not following
 procedures.

INT. MARGARET'S OFFICE. MORNING.
 MARGARET FINISHES BLANDLY DRESSING DOWN LULU, who seems weirdly disappointed not to be fired.

MARGARET
 I'm afraid I will have to put you
 on probation. There was a
 complaint made.

LULU ROLLS HER EYES. Margaret catches her. Margaret puts the Twitter print-out away and looks Lulu in the eyes.

MARGARET

Lulu, you've been here since you graduated and I'm proud to have such a high-level graduate on the staff, but please remember that there are other people in this office.

Lulu desperately fights the urge to roll her eyes again.

MARGARET

A lot... is about to change. You're all going to need to *work together*. Now more than ever.

INT. LAMINATION ROOM. MORNING.

A LONG THIN WINDOWLESS ROOM. Yasmin stands at the laminator, carefully feeding in sheets. Lulu shoves the sheets into the plastic sleeves messily, and Yasmin re-does most of them.

LULU

Why did she have to remind me how long I've been here? My ex from uni, he's the assistant to a shadow cabinet minister. What the fuck am I doing?

YASMIN

Laminating...

Yasmin giggles, utterly entranced by the slow, satisfying process of the lamination machine. CLOSE UP OF THE SHEETS:

'SECURITY ALERT: Keep your LANYARD on you at ALL TIMES. If you see someone you DON'T RECOGNISE, tell a member of STAFF.'

LULU

You know what I felt when I thought I was fired? Fucking elation. Pure joy.

YASMIN

So why don't you quit?

LULU

You want me to?

YASMIN

No! Just--

LULU

Well I wouldn't get the two weeks severance plus holiday, would I? I'd have to get a new job like yesterday. And the economy... Fucking Tara!

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YASMIN
 (laughing)
 How did Tara come into it now?

LULU
 Well who do you think filed 'the complaint'? Why can't she just get a life. M&S profiteroles are probably the closest she's ever got to sex.

YASMIN
 She's got a fiancé.

THEY BOTH GIGGLE. Lulu playfully slaps Yasmin. An in-joke.

YASMIN
 You don't know it was her.

LULU
 Yeah, well, she's certainly deserving of my wrath either way. Someone's got to puncture her ego...

YASMIN
 Oh, god. What are you gonna do?

Lulu smiles mischievously.

EXT. COLLEGE ENTRANCE. MORNING.

OUTSIDE THE COLLEGE GATES, SONNY, still holding the flowers, is finishing a spliff.

INT. OFFICE. MORNING. 10.55AM.

Jan and Viktoria are silently working. TARA BURSTS IN AGAIN, letting out A LONG, AGITATED SIGH.

TARA
 This is not good.

NOBODY BITES. Viktoria is deep in thought, and Jan is struggling with Microsoft Excel.

TARA
 Margaret is not going to like this!

INT. CORRIDOR. MORNING.

Yasmin and Lulu walk back to the office with the signs.

YASMIN
 How are things going with Andrea?

LULU
 The same.

YASMIN
 (laughing)
 Maybe you're just straight?

LULU
 I'm queer AF. I just haven't
 slept with a woman yet!

Yasmin doesn't quite get this.

LULU
 And your 'secret man'?

YASMIN
 Can't see him right now. We're
 having to be more discreet than
 usual.

LULU
 Hmmmm. And you're sure he's not
 married?

YASMIN
 Hey! It's just complicated.

LULU
 Well at least it's sexually
 simple. Andrea is SO hot, and
 cool. Must be internalised
 homophobia. Fucking Patriarchy.
 And Capitalism, probably.

YASMIN
 Maybe Tara is a repressed
 lesbian, too.

LULU
 I don't think so.

YASMIN
 You don't know everything about
 everyone, you know.

LULU
 Yeah, this office is just *full* of
 surprises.

INT. OFFICE. MORNING.

YASMIN AND LULU ENTER. They're GIGGLING LOUDLY. TARA GLARES.

TARA
 Does it take two people to do one
 laminating job?

LULU
 I already finished all my spreads
 and did the attendance filing.

(MORE)

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LULU (CONT'D)

And now it's ten fifty-two which means Jan probably needs some basic computer help from one of us dynamic Millennials...

JAN

(distressed)

Oh, yes, actually. Could you?

Lulu leans over Jan and takes hold of her mouse. Tara frowns and TURNS ON YASMIN.

TARA

Why haven't you finished the boxes?

LULU

Oh, Jan, you're an absolute artist! How did you make every cell of this spreadsheet invalid? Seriously?

YASMIN

(to Tara)

I have. They're all stacked--

TARA

Well what are they supposed to do, magically sort themselves into alphabetical order!? Hmm?

YASMIN'S LIP WOBBLES SLIGHTLY. She nods and starts removing the papers from the boxes. Lulu looks up, angry.

LULU

Why are we taking the financial records out of chronological? Surely that's just gonna make things harder to find--

TARA

No, actually, it's very streamlined.

Beat.

LULU

What?

Suddenly, VIKTORIA TURNS TO FACE THEM ALL. She clears her throat.

VIKTORIA

I will be taking a few hours off this afternoon for a personal matter.

Everyone stops what they're doing and STARES AT HER.

TARA
What?

LULU
Mic drop!

SONNY (O.S.)
Hello ladies...

Reveal: SONNY STANDING AT RECEPTION, holding flowers.
Beat. The other women recognise and are clearly STUNNED to see him. NONE OF THEM SMILE, Lulu folds her arms.

EXT. COLLEGE CAR PARK. MORNING.

SONNY AND YASMIN walk away from the college to talk. Yasmin limply holds the flowers.

YASMIN
I just didn't expect to see you--

SONNY
Surprise your lover, innit.

YASMIN
Well, we're not technically--

HE SUDDENLY GRABS HER ROUND THE WAIST, she shrieks and pushes him off. A goofy silence.

SONNY
Yaz. Listen. When I was banged up for eighteen months for knife crime--

YASMIN
Failure to appear in court--

SONNY
I was thinking a lot about how to treat you better, innit--

YASMIN
--After helping to rob a NISA.

SONNY
And knowing you was waiting for me--

YASMIN
--My* mum's* NISA. Where she takes Jasmin to buy Buenos!

SONNY
Is what enabled me to confront my negative patterns of behaviour, innit.

HE STEPS FORWARD AND TAKES HER HAND, puts it against his face. His caramel brown eyes lock into her soul. Pause. She softens.

SONNY

I love you, Yazzy. I have since Year Nine. I want you back.

She melts.

INT. OFFICE. MORNING.

LULU OBSERVES THE TWO OF THEM from afar. She doesn't look pleased. They embrace. Lulu frowns.

TARA (O.S.)

And why didn't he have a visitor badge!? That security guard is risking all our lives! I'm calling him...

EXT. COLLEGE CAR PARK. MORNING.

BACK TO YASMIN AND SONNY, kissing softly.

SONNY

Can I ask you something?

YASMIN

(suddenly very worried)
What?

SONNY

Have you heard chat about a stash?

Yasmin breaks away, confused.

SONNY

No big ting, yeh, but word is BDP is using this place. Their youngers go here innit. You'll have a look for me, yeah?

YASMIN

I thought you confronted your behaviour?

SONNY

Don't judge me, that causes negative patterns. Will you do this or do you not even care about me at all anymore?

YASMIN

No!

YASMIN'S FACE CONTRACTS with the terror of hurting him.

END OF ACT I

EXT. COLLEGE CAR PARK. MORNING. 11.34AM.

YASMIN WALKS BACK UP TO THE COLLEGE. Sonny's just left and she's texting someone called 'Dommo' as she walks:

YASMIN: *Need to talk. EMERGENCY. xxx*

INT. OFFICE. MORNING.

YASMIN ENTERS and goes straight back to the boxes.

JAN, who's just fetched tea for everyone, POPS IN BEHIND HER.

LULU EYES YASMIN SUSPICIOUSLY. Tara, standing, talks to Jan at her desk.

TARA

Yes, it starred Robert Williams.

JAN

Oh I love him! So funny.

Lulu, to herself, mimes impaling her head on a sharp pencil.

TARA

VERY funny, but he did commit suicide so there you go.

Jan nods sagely. LULU GETS UP to use the photocopier. YASMIN JOINS HER.

YASMIN

Can I talk to you?

LULU

About Sonny? He dicks you around, we talk about it, you go back to him. Can you just do it without me this time?

YASMIN

It's not like that! He wants--

Lulu lets out A JUDGEMENTAL SIGH.

VIKTORIA'S MOBILE RINGS. Again, she hurriedly exits.

YASMIN

You're not being fair-- You think you know-- Maybe you're just... jealous.

BEAT. She regrets it. Lulu looks at her, then walks away.

JAN

It's very unusual for Viktoria to take time off, isn't it?

LULU

In almost two years I've never seen her take a full lunch hour. I assumed she slept under the Reception desk.

YASMIN

(pointed)

Some people take their jobs seriously.

JAN

But do you think she's alright?

TARA

Yes, well, it's a private matter.

JAN

Did she tell you what it is?

TARA

Well, I couldn't comment. For confidentiality reasons.

LULU SCOFFS LOUDLY. Tara's clearly lying. Tara registers the insult but says nothing.

JAN

She'll cheer up when she finds her cake!

EVERYONE LOOKS AT JAN.

LULU

Jan. Jan. Jan. What do you mean 'finds' her cake? We talked about this.

JAN

I'm just going to hide it in her desk while she's out.

Jan tries to act nonchalant but quickly breaks into a delighted smile. EVERYBODY ELSE ROLLS THEIR EYES.

VIKTORIA RETURNS. Jan looks hurt.

A slightly awkward silence. Tara puffs herself up.

TARA

Listen.

(MORE)

TARA (CONT'D)

I'm going to discuss this formally with Margaret at the end of the day when we do The Handover, but there are some problems in the inventory. I'm going to need to interview each of you separately to rule out any--
Actually! Forget I said anything.

NOBODY BITES. Yasmin focuses hard on the sorting the box of papers, Jan tentatively clicks her spreadsheet, Lulu scans The Guardian homepage, Viktoria stares soberly into space.

TARA

Just forget it! Okay!?

Irritated by their lack of interest, Tara huffs out of the room, only to immediately reappear, BELLOWING:

TARA

DOES ANYONE WANT TEA?

Her eyes fall on the tray of teas Jan's just brought in. She exits, SLAMMING THE DOOR.

INT. COLLEGE. DAY

MONTAGE (with music):

TARA NOISILY SLAMS DOWN CUPS in the kitchen, making tea. She opens a pack of biscuits and pours a mountain onto a plate.

YASMIN SITS FULLY-CLOTHED IN A TOILET CUBICLE and LOOKS AT THE CRUDE MAP THAT SONNY'S GIVEN HER, which marks the point where the stash is supposed to be.

JAN OPENS A DRAWER and retrieves a pack of oatcakes, she carefully BREAKS ON IN HALF AND EATS IT, replacing the rest in the packet. SHE ONCE MORE OPENS HER LOWER DRAWER AND LOOKS LOVINGLY AT HER CAKE, then towards VIKTORIA, who is completely still, staring into space with a HAUNTED EXPRESSION.

LULU EMERGES FROM A CORRIDOR carrying a stack of photocopies. She looks exhausted with boredom, ready for mischief. She lands in front of Reception and taps out a rhythm.

LULU

How's it going?

VIKTORIA

(plastic smile)

Yeah, good.

LULU

Can you believe it is only eleven forty-four? Can you BELIEVE that?

Made in Highland

VIKTORIA

Well, the day will be over before you know it.

LULU

Yeah! We'll all be dead, the earth will be sucked into the fiery heat of the sun, and we'll have spent vastly more time here than with our loved ones. You've cheered me up. Thanks, Vik.

VIKTORIA

Good.

Beat. Lulu peers into Viktoria's hard, expressionless eyes.

LULU

I'm supposed to check the voicemail for that stationery re-up. But the code was changed--?

VIKTORIA

There are no voicemails from the supplier.

LULU

They're supposed to call today--

VIKTORIA

I'll pick it up.

Lulu is feeling cruel.

LULU

(teasing)

What about when you're off on your mystery mission this PM?

Viktoria just slightly narrows her eyes.

TARA IS APPROACHING from down the corridor with a tray of teas and a plate of biscuits.

VIKTORIA

Jan! Will you cover reception for me while I'm out?

JAN

Yes! No problem!

CUT TO:

JAN AGAIN SNEAKS A PEEK AT THE CAKE in her drawer. Bingo. She looks up to see YASMIN LOOKING DOWN AT HER with a mix of disapproval and concern.

BACK TO:

THE RECEPTION DESK. TARA LINGERS, SENSING TENSION.

Made in Highland

TARA

Is there a problem, ladies?

LULU

Yes, yes there is. We're just terrified that we've run out of Chocolate Bourbons-- Oh, you've found some. Oh thank God! Great.

Tara TUTS and leaves. LULU WINKS AT VIKTORIA AND EXITS.

INT. TOILET. DAY.

YASMIN STANDS BY THE SINKS. She's on the phone, we don't yet know with whom. She's agitated.

YASMIN

No! I didn't say that! Listen-- Listen! It's just... me and Sonny, we were together so long and I just... I feel, like, responsible, you know? Maybe if I can just make sure he's okay-- No. I know. I do too. Sorry. Sorry. --Sorry.

INT. OFFICE. DAY. 11.58AM

TARA

(entering)

Okay, important announcement. Is everybody here?

YASMIN ISN'T, but no one notices/ points it out. Lulu sighs and puts in her headphones.

TARA

So Margaret has just emailed me to inform me that the Bromley manager will be arriving at one thirty for a very important briefing--

JAN

Is that where the new branch is? My hairdresser's son lives in Bromley.

TARA

Yes, so does my niece and her fiancé! The point is, ladies, that this merger *has not happened* yet. Bromley need to sign off on it in order for us to apply for trust status, and if that doesn't happen--

LULU
 (standing)
 Time for a smoke break.

YASMIN IS RE-ENTERING the office from the toilet.

TARA
 Lulu! We're in the middle of a meeting!

Lulu puts on her jacket.

LULU
 What are we talking about?
 Inventory? Hairdressing progeny?

TARA
 Bromley! You know this is very important to The Head. If it goes wrong--

LULU
 This isn't a meeting, it's just entertainment for tiny minds. What's up, Tara? Is *Strictly* still off-air?

PING. Yasmin receives a text:
 SONNY: *Did u look yet? Find anything? x*

TARA
 Lulu! This behaviour is REALLY not going to reflect well--

Rage building, LULU GLARES AT TARA.

LULU
 So what are you going to do?

Tense moment. Suddenly, their standoff is interrupted by the SOUND OF AN UNFAMILIAR MALE VOICE.

JJ (O.S.)
 Hi yeh I'm here to see my mum.

JAN JUMPS UP AND RUNS TO RECEPTION, where a skinny, shaven-headed 24 year-old stands waiting.

JAN
 JJ! What are you doing here, darling?

TARA
 (red-faced)
 Where is your visitor badge!?!?

JJ stares coldly at her for a beat, then replies to his mum:

Made in Highland

JJ
Yeah I left my keys at Benji's
and also I need some money for my
Oyster Card.

Lulu exits into the reception area. JJ CLOCKS HER.

JJ
(smoky stare)
Hey.

LULU
(unimpressed)
Howdy.

JAN
Have you two met?

LULU
(turning to leave)
Nope.

TARA
We really need to impose a limit
on all these *Personal* visitors,
quite frankly.

LULU TURNS BACK, grinning cruelly.

LULU
Is that why *Michael* never visits,
Tara?

TARA GOES RED. Yasmin puts a hand up to her face. LULU
LEAVES, the revolving door spinning with the furiousness of
her exit.

EXT. COLLEGE CAR PARK. DAY.

LULU SMOKES SULKILY in a secluded corner. JJ APPROACHES.

INT. COLLEGE HALLS. DAY.

YASMIN WANDERS THE HALLS TENTATIVELY, holding Sonny's map.
She peers into each classroom and study space as she goes
past. It's horror-movie empty.

INT. OFFICE. DAY.

TARA IS SITTING NEXT TO JAN. They're both drinking tea. Jan
is still struggling with the same spreadsheet, cursing it
softly under her breath.

JAN
Of course Lulu respects you. How
silly!

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TARA

Honestly I don't know what Margaret sees in her. Qualifications aren't everything. I left school at sixteen and so did everyone in my family. Nothing wrong with it, quite frankly.

JAN

I was married at seventeen...

Tara isn't interested in talking about Jan's life.

TARA

Jan, can I tell you something?

Jan turns immediately from the spreadsheet, mum-instinct on.

EXT. COLLEGE CAR PARK. DAY.

JJ ROLLS A SPLIFF. Lulu eyes him coolly as she chugs on her half-finished cigarette.

LULU

Which one are you then? The youngest?

JJ

Number three. Second-youngest.

HE FINISHES ROLLING THE SPLIFF, he neatly burns the ends off and LIGHTS IT UP, taking a toke and then passing it to Lulu.

A quick look around and then a 'FUCK THEM' shrug, she takes it. She wants to do something bad.

LULU

Not very nice to your mum are you? You lot.

JJ

(exhaling)
My mum's fucking crazy.

LULU

Yeah, well, I have to spend eight hours a day with her.

She passes it back to him.

JJ

Are you the lesbian?

INT. SCIENCE CLASSROOM. DAY.

YASMIN ENTERS A LARGE SCIENCE LAB/ CLASSROOM.

Made in Highland

Sinks, bunsen burners, gas taps on the smooth white benches, phallic test tubes sitting patiently in racks.

On the whiteboard is written 'EASTER H/W. P123-130 + coursework prep' and below that somebody else has written 'SHANIQUA IS A DUTTY HO BAG'.

Yasmin wades into the room, TALKING TO HERSELF UNDER HER BREATH:

YASMIN

Yeah, I looked-- yeah I did have a look, Sonny. Sorry-- yeah I had a good look, Sonny-- Well, yeah, I looked but no couldn't find anything-- I guess it's just, y'know, people talk, don't they? --I guess it was just a rumour--

SHE CONTINUES THIS AS SHE SEARCHES the cupboards, drawers and alcoves of the room, desperately hoping not to find it.

SATISFIED, SHE STOPS AND TAKES A DEEP BREATH. But her relief is turned to dread as SHE CATCHES SIGHT OF A DOOR in a corner of the classroom, marked with a neon pink 'BDP' tag. Oh no.

INT. OFFICE. DAY.

Tara and Jan, leaning in close. Jan looks concerned.

JAN

Just seems like a strange number.

TARA

Well that's how many laptops were needed, clearly. It was for the Special Needs department, nobody questions them!

JAN

But they never arrived?

TARA

I don't know! I mean, actually they must've because Margaret signed for them. But they're gone now and they weren't even entered into the--

JAN

How much money are we talking about?

TARA

Thirteen thousand six hundred!

JAN

That's so much!

Made in Highland

TARA

I know! No one is taking me seriously. And after the break-in last term! I've been telling Margaret for-- People are not following security procedures. But, it's like people think I'm just making a big deal about nothing.

Jan looks away.

EXT. COLLEGE CAR PARK. DAY.

In an even more secluded part of the campus, JJ AND LULU ARE FURIOUSLY DRY-HUMPING. The spliff is finished and Lulu is straddling him.

LULU

I'm really high.

JJ

Yeh.

THEY KISS, aggressively if not passionately.

LULU

Get hard.

JJ

(turned on)

Okay.

SHE UNZIPS HIS FLY, then hers.

LULU

Really hard.

They press against each other.

JJ

(more turned on)

Okay.

LULU

Like a fucking diamond.

SHE PULLS OUT HIS PENIS.

JJ

Okay!

He goes for her pants but she elegantly knocks him away. SHE GUIDES HIS PENIS AGAINST HER clothed crotch and almost immediately falls against him in a small but shuddering orgasm.

SHE PULLS BACK, SATISFIED, AND RE-ZIPS HER TROUSERS.

LULU
(turning to exit)
Okay, see you.

JJ
What!?! Come back! What the fuck?

SHE LEAVES, GRINNING.

JJ
Crazy lesbian prick-tease!

INT. SCIENCE CLASSROOM. DAY.

YASMIN MOVES, TERRIFIED, TOWARDS THE CUPBOARD.
It has a code padlock on it. She takes it in her hand, then refers to Sonny's notes and sees 'code: 8008'.

INT. OFFICE. DAY. 12.23PM.

TARA AND JAN are still whispering at Jan's desk.

WE FOCUS ON VIKTORIA, WHO SITS AT HER COMPUTER, TRYING TO WORK. SHE OPENS A PERSONAL EMAIL TO FIND A GRAINY, ZOOMED IN PHOTO:

IT'S HER TWO CHILDREN, playing in the back garden, you can just make out Viktoria in the kitchen behind them. The email subject line is 'FOUND YOU'.

Terrified and shocked, she hurriedly deletes the email, grabs her phone and RUNS OUT OF THE OFFICE.

TARA
I suspect...

She looks around the tiny, empty office as though *absolutely* anyone could be there, listening intently.

JAN
(serious)
Foul play?

TARA
I suspect that we may be dealing with a colleague within this particular department, in fact.

JAN
But, do you mean--

TARA
Embezzlement!

JAN'S EYES WIDEN in a way that's very satisfying to Tara.

JAN

Do you think it might be related to the financial discrepancies from the last quarter?

TARA

What!?

JAN

I sent you an email in February. Did you read--?

TARA

Of course I--

LULU ENTERS, they both freeze guiltily.

Lulu, still pretty stoned, tries very hard to talk normally.

LULU

Hel--lo.

Jan and Tara nod guardedly. Weird pause. Tara stands.

TARA

Right! I'd better go tell the security guard to expect the Bromley manager at two. God knows what he'll--

Tara EXITS.

Jan and Lulu are left guiltily looking at each other.

Beat.

LULU

Do you want? I'm gonna tea. Okay, cool.

LULU EXITS.

Left alone in the office. JAN IMMEDIATELY PULLS OPEN HER DRAWER and brings out Viktoria's cake. Gleefully, she sneaks over to the reception desk, and HIDES THE CAKE INSIDE. Success!

INT. SCIENCE CLASSROOM. DAY.

Not daring to breathe, SHE SLOWLY SLOTS EACH OF THE COGS INTO PLACE AND THEN CLICKS THE BUTTON. IT POPS OPEN.

YASMIN

Oh, no.

SHE OPENS THE DOOR TO REVEAL TWO LARGE DUFFEL BAGS (the same ones we saw the dark figures carrying in the opening scene).

She leans down and UNZIPS ONE, we see the CHUNKS OF CASH POKING OUT.

Made in Highland

SUDDENLY, a NOISE from outside the classroom. SHE FREEZES.

END OF ACT II.

EXT. COLLEGE ENTRANCE. 12.46PM.

Tara trots angrily towards the SECURITY BOOTH at the entrance to the car park.

TARA

Excuse me!

But as she arrives, she realises IT'S EMPTY. She stands, hands on hips, before waddling back up through the car park, muttering to herself.

TARA

Completely unacceptable!

INT. SCIENCE CLASSROOM. DAY.

YASMIN, IN A BLIND PANIC, GRABS ONE OF THE LARGE, HEAVY DUFFEL BAGS AND RUNS TOWARDS THE CLASSROOM DOOR.

She looks out into the corridor, sees that the coast is clear and MAKES A DASH FOR IT, WALKING SWIFTLY ROUND THE CORNER.

IAN (O.S.)

Yasmin!

CLOSE UP: Yasmin's face: fuck!

QUICKLY, SHE OPENS THE DOOR OF A NEARBY STATIONERY CUPBOARD AND FLINGS THE BAG INSIDE, just as he appears round the corner.

IAN, 33, is a stocky, bearded IT teacher who always has sweat patches but who behaves like a confident, attractive man. Yasmin seems quite used to his unwanted attention.

IAN

Where you running off to, eh?

YASMIN

What are you doing here!?

IAN

(holding up papers)
Photocopying. For my sins.

YASMIN

(distracted)
Oh. You could have left it in the tray in the office--

IAN STEPS FORWARD AND TAKES HOLD OF HER SHOULDERS. Creepy.

IAN
Is something wrong, Yasmin? You can tell me. After all, we go way back.

He smiles. Yasmin tries to.

IAN
Boy trouble again?

YASMIN
(unable to meet his gaze)
No, no... Mr. Campbell.

IAN
Ian. You're not my student anymore. Speaking of which, I was wondering--

He's rubbing her arm.

YASMIN
Listen I'm really sorry but I've got to get back! Sorry!

YASMIN RUNS. Ian stands, his hand still gripping the air where her arm was.

INT. STAFF KITCHEN. DAY. 12.49PM.

LULU inhales one of Tara's Weight Watcher's Yoghurts.

LULU
(to herself)
I am a *little* bit too high.

Suddenly, she is STARTLED BY A HAND ON HER SHOULDER.

LULU
Jesus fucking Christ!

Lulu turns to see the FEMALE CLEANER from the opening scenes.

CLEANER
You work in office?

LULU
(shaken)
Yeah. Sorry. I didn't see you.
Jesus.

CLEANER
Here. I found this in classroom.

SHE HANDS LULU AN AMATEUR EXPLOSIVE DEVICE, a fuse connected to a ball of small sparklers.

CLEANER

They see them on internet, then
they make them. You step on this
and--

She points to a clip on the end of the fuse and makes a
'BOOM' gesture.

CLEANER

Very loud. Yes? You give to
headmaster. You tell him I not
leave The Gambia to have a heart
attack in school. Okay?

LULU

Okay...

The cleaner shuffles off.

LULU LOOKS AT THE OBJECT IN HER HAND. SLOWLY, AN IDEA FORMS.

INT. OFFICE. 12.57PM.

JAN AND TARA whispering again. VIKTORIA returns to her desk.

TARA

(whispering)

I'm afraid I'm beginning to
suspect something is amiss with
Viktoria.

JAN

But you said--

Tara, looking at the back of Viktoria's head, SHUSHES HER.

LULU ENTERS from the car park, still stoned.

YASMIN ENTERS, flustered and distracted.

Another HEAVY SILENCE fills the small space.

TARA

Ahem. Lulu, regarding your
attitude, I want to you to come
to Margaret's office at the end
of the day with me so that we can
talk about what happened.

LULU

(too stoned to care)

Okay.

A PING from Lulu's computer. A FACECHAT WINDOW with an
instant message from Yasmin:

YASMIN: look i'm sorry.

TARA (CONT'D)

There is fraud, missing laptops.
An embezzler in our mist! They
may also be responsible for the
break-in last term for all we
know! Everyone needs to
understand how serious--!

She runs out of breath. VIKTORIA SAYS NOTHING.

Beat. PING from Lulu's computer.

YASMIN: wtf tho

LULU: Shes finally lost it.

TARA looks deep into VIKTORIA'S eyes, pleading, genuinely hurt.

TARA

Why won't you tell me?

VIKTORIA

(firm)

It's personal.

TARA

We've worked together for FOUR
YEARS. You and me. Before
Margaret even came...

VIKTORIA SAYS NOTHING. Jan holds out the box of muffins between them like a peace pipe. Lulu and Yasmin watch passively from behind their computers.

VIKTORIA LUNGES FOR THE DOOR HANDLE. TARA BLOCKS HER. THEY TUSSELE WITH MODERATE VIOLENCE.

THE OTHERS ARE SHOCKED. Jan puts her hand to her mouth. The girls stand up, but are unable to approach. It's so bizarre.

TARA MANAGES TO LOCK THE DOOR.

VIKTORIA TUTS ANGRILY to herself and goes to sit back down.

TARA TAKES CONTROL.

TARA

You all need to know something.
When the trust status is sorted
and the second branch is
incorporated, Margaret will be
making me the Office Manager.
Okay?

Lulu scoffs.

TARA

She's going to talk to The Head and make it official when we get back from Easter.

LULU

Okay, congrats. You're very big and important. Are none of us allowed to go to lunch now?

TARA

Jan, tell me - again - about these financial indiscrepancies.

JAN

At first it was just one or two things that didn't add up. But I thought maybe I'd made a mistake. There were things that had been ordered or invoiced but the forms didn't match. Margaret said for now we'd leave it and--

TARA

Aha! You see?

VIKTORIA

See what? Margaret said it was fine.

TARA

And now there are seventeen missing laptops and we're going to get to the bottom of it. No one's leaving here until we do.

LULU

And where are these laptops? On Jan's spreadsheet? Very reliable.

LULU laughs. JAN looks hurt. Only YASMIN notices.

YASMIN

Look, Tara, it totally sounds serious but it couldn't have been anyone here. That's, like, crazy. It's just a mixup.

JAN

I've only been here a year but I don't think any of you could do this. Listen, when my boys get into an argument about who did what or whatever, I just tell them to take a deep breath and--

TARA

Quiet!

Silence. Jan holds out the box of muffins plaintively.

LULU
I didn't do it. If I had that
kind of money I wouldn't be *here*
anymore.

YASMIN
(snapping at Lulu)
Why do you have to be rude?

JAN
Girls, don't fight. Oh, my phone!

JAN'S MOBILE GOES OFF. It's on the other side of the room by
the photocopier. VIKTORIA PASSES IT TO HER, then stops.

VIKTORIA
Why is my husband calling your
phone!?

JAN
Oh, no reason! (into phone)
Sorry!

SHE HANGS UP, smiling guiltily.

A SUDDEN, HARSH BEEP. It's the answerphone.
During this distraction, TARA HAS FOUND THE NEW CODE ON A
POST-IT AND IS PLAYING THE MESSAGES.
VIKTORIA LUNGES TOWARDS IT, but it's too late.

EVERYONE JUMPS UP AND GATHERS AROUND IT.

VOICEMAIL (O.S.)
(harsh, crackly voice)
I know what you're up to, you
bitch! You won't get away with
it!

EVERYONE TURNS TO VIKTORIA, WHO SITS DOWN heavily in her
chair.
Beat.

VIKTORIA
I don't have to tell you
anything.

LULU
It's just an office full of
women, Viktoria. Of course we
respect your right to privacy--

YASMIN
Stop being mean about the office!
It's not helping!

LULU
Okay! Sorry! I'm defending Vik--

VIKTORIA
I don't need defending!

TARA
So tell us what's going on!

JAN
Viktoria, love, what is it? Is it
to do with the girls, or Phillip?
(whispering darkly) Is it
something to do with Africa?

Lulu rolls her eyes.

TARA
(arms folded)
You'd better just tell us.

YASMIN
Viktoria, this is just getting
too dramatic, sorry, PLEASE!
PLEEEAAASE!

The tension and suspense is too much for little Yasmin, SHE'S
HOPPING UP AND DOWN ON THE SPOT.

YASMIN
Just -- WHAT IS IT!? Aaah!

Pause. Viktoria puts her purse on the desk and exhales.

VIKTORIA
It's Phillip-- Phillip and I
are-- have separated.

GASPS.

JAN
Oh my God, when?

VIKTORIA
Nine months ago.

TARA
(furious)
WHAT? WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL ME?

Viktoria sighs, really giving in.

VIKTORIA
I was at my church group. I go to
a church group, it is -- none of
you go to church, I know -- but
it is a group where women discuss
with the pastor how to bring
Jesus into the marriage. To let
him watch over the marriage. How
can we do this?
(MORE)

VIKTORIA (CONT'D)

We discuss our problems and sometimes we write down our problems so that the pastor can read them aloud and no one will know who said what. And--

She sighs again. The women lean forward, listening intently.

VIKTORIA

At the time it didn't seem so strange, so big, but afterwards I kept thinking about it. About how someone else was going through the same thing and I didn't even know who it was. When the pastor read it, he said 'No, you must not go to the police, you must ask for help from the Lord.' But I knew I couldn't keep doing that. I knew it then. So I left him. I moved things, bit by bit, to Prudence's house - I live with my sister now - and then I waited until he was out in the evening and I took the girls. I told them we were going for a surprise sleepover with their cousin, Wise. They were so excited to be outside in their pyjamas...

She stops, almost too emotional but still elegantly stoic.

JAN

Oh, Vik...

LULU

Shit.

YASMIN

So today--?

VIKTORIA

So he was furious, of course. And he's decided to do something. He sent his friends to watch me and threaten me. He says he wants to see the girls, or if not to be paid 'damages'--

JAN and YASMIN make eye contact. Yasmin mouths the word 'Philip'. Jan is mortified. She looks at her phone.

LULU

The fuck!

VIKTORIA

So I have finally agreed to a
'mediation' session at our
church. That's where I'm going
today. It was on his time.

YASMIN

But you don't have to!

LULU

Go to the police!

VIKTORIA SNAPS.

VIKTORIA

It is not any of YOUR BUSINESS! I
will not tell you any more! You
are all very IMMORAL WOMEN!

Everyone stares. This is a side of placid Viktoria that
they've never really seen before.

TARA

Now listen. I'm sorry, Viktoria,
this is very unfortunate. But you
forced me-- I mean, you could
have told me in confidence, and--

VIKTORIA

YOU! You do not get to decide MY
LIFE! Okay? You are just some
silly little fat woman who has NO
MAN!

VIKTORIA TURNS TO THE OTHERS, ELECTRIC WITH RAGE.

VIKTORIA

Her 'fiancé' is just a man online
that she sends money to! She
never even met him in real life!

Jan and Yasmin are shocked. Lulu grins. TARA IS MORTIFIED.

YASMIN'S PHONE RINGS. FLUSTERED, SHE PICKS UP.

YASMIN

Sonny, I can't talk right--

SONNY (O.S.)

Babe, I'm sorry, I just wanted to
say--

YASMIN

No, it's okay, I just--

Yasmin tries to walk into a corner for privacy. Everyone is
still looking at Tara.

JAN

Tara, it's okay--

Made in Highland

TARA

Shut up!

SONNY (O.S.)

I just wanted to say that I'm sorry I was on a hypeting before. I ain't tryin' to pressure you, innit.

YASMIN

I know, I know.

SONNY (O.S)

It's just-- The reason I was so on it about the money was cos I wanna take care of you, girl. You feel me? We should get outta here. Together. We can go to Barbados, like we used to chat about at school, we can live on the beach and you can make jewellery out of shells and shit--

YASMIN

Okay, yeah, okay.

Yasmin looks worried. This is not what she wants.

SONNY (O.S.)

And, you know, you can work on your Youtube flex and be a influencer, get sponce, get money. You're so special--

TARA, FURIOUS, TURNS ON YASMIN.

TARA

What do you think you're doing?

YASMIN

Oh, nothing, sorry. Sonny I'll call you back, sorry, it's work. Okay?

SONNY (O.S)

That's peak. Listen, I also wanted to let you know that some shit might be going down at the college, today-- Another crew *might* have heard about--

YASMIN

Okay, bye, Sonny, bye.

CUT TO:

Made in Highland

SONNY, looking at his phone. WE SEE HE'S BEEN BADLY BEATEN UP, a black eye, cut lip and bruises.

CUT TO:

EXT. COLLEGE GATE. 13.25PM.

THE SECURITY GUARD RAISES THE MECHANICAL ARM WITHOUT LOOKING TO LET IN A BEATEN-UP OLD CAR.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. OFFICE. DAY.

TARA GLARES AT YASMIN, then points.

TARA

I bet it's YOU! Conspiring with your criminal boyfriend!

YASMIN

No! And he's not my boyfriend!

YASMIN BURSTS INTO TEARS. Tara takes this as an admission of guilt, she makes an 'aha!' gesture.

LULU

Sure he's not.

YASMIN

(through tears)
Hey!

LULU

Look kid, I hate to say it but she's right. You have no control with that guy. It's pathetic.

YASMIN

(through tears)
You know what's pathetic? Having to make fun of nice people all day on Twitter JUST COS YOU FEEL SHITTY ABOUT YOUR OWN LIFE!

LULU

What?

YASMIN

It was me who complained to Margaret!

LULU

Are you serious!? Why?

JAN

Girls, calm down. You're friends!

LULU
 (turning on Jan)
 OH JESUS CHRIST! What is wrong
 with you? Stop telling people to
 calm down, stop bringing in
 cakes, stop hiding cakes in weird
 fucking places--

JAN'S EYES DART INVOLUNTARILY TO VIKTORIA'S DESK.

LULU
 Why do you need to please
 EVERYONE for EVERY MILLISECOND OF
 THE DAY? You know I actually like
 cake?

JAN
 You do!?

LULU
 OF COURSE! I'm a human woman! I
 just can't stand YOU! I'm not the
 only one!

Beat. Jan takes a breath.

JAN
 Your twitter page was hurtful.
 Yasmin's right.

TARA
 (muttering)
 Terrible attitude.

Lulu slumps down angrily onto a chair. Yasmin confesses,
 babyishly tearful:

YASMIN
 I'm sorry, I didn't want to get
 you fired. But maybe I thought...
 You should either leave or you
 should stop messing around. It
 was last week after you did that
 thing to Tara's chair--

LULU
 You said that was funny!

TARA
 What did you do to my chair?

YASMIN
 That's not the point.

TARA
 What did you do to my chair? Is
 that why I had to change my
 trousers?!

Made in Highland

LULU SMIRKS. She can't help it. Tara is enraged, and turns on Yasmin.

TARA

What's going on with Sonny? Did he ask you to do something?

YASMIN NODS, still sobbing.

LULU

Stop it, Tara! You're not our boss! You're just a bully!

TARA

Says the cyberbully!

JAN JUMPS UP.

JAN

It was me!

THEY ALL LOOK AT HER, SHOCKED.

JAN

I mean, the break-in, and maybe the other stuff. I don't know! I mean... I... I... lost my keycard... in January!

Some GASPS, along with some 'oh Jan' eye rolls.

YASMIN

Why didn't you report it? You're supposed to report it so they can--

JAN

I was afraid! I'm always messing up. You're all so good at your jobs and I didn't want to--

SHE CAN'T GO ON. Tara shakes her head.

YASMIN

That's why you're always coming in behind me. Tailgating.

Jan nods. Tara folds her arms.

TARA

Well! In thirty-five years of work I have NEVER worked with a more incompetent, lazy, insubordinate, awful bunch of wom--

SUDDENLY--

BROMLEY MANAGER (O.S.)
Um. Hello. I'm here to meet with
Margaret Oxenbury...?

THEY ALL TURN TO SEE THE BROMLEY OFFICE MANAGER, a petite and pleasant-looking forty year-old in large round glasses, WITH A LAMINATED VISITOR BADGE, standing behind reception.

THEY ALL STARE, Tara red in the face, Yasmin in tears, Lulu sulky, Jan penitent, Viktoria stern; all of them unable to remember who this stranger is or why she's here.

BEAT. The manager smiles awkwardly.

END OF ACT III.

INT. MARGARET'S OFFICE. 13.50PM.

CLOSE UP: A GREY PLASTIC DESK PHONE. RINGING. AND RINGING.

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE. AFTERNOON.

VIKTORIA WITH THE OTHER END OF THE PHONE TO HER EAR. It keeps ringing. The Bromley manager awkwardly waits behind reception.

BROMLEY MANAGER
Oof. It's quite chilly for April!

They continue staring at her.

TARA
It's going to be cold until
Friday.

BROMLEY MANAGER
Oh. Right.

Viktoria puts down the phone.

VIKTORIA
No answer.

BROMLEY MANAGER
I just tried her mobile before
and I didn't get anything.

TARA
She gave you her personal number?
Herself?

BROMLEY MANAGER SHRUGS AND NODS, slightly unnerved by the intensity of the question. Tara frowns.

TARA

Well, you can just take a seat in Waiting Area there and we will call you in due course when Margaret ultimately becomes available--

BROMLEY MANAGER

Okay... Do you think I could just use the lavatory?

TARA

Down the hall, on the left. I'm afraid the hand dryer is broken. Paper towels have been provided.

BROMLEY MANAGER SMILES AND EXITS AWKWARDLY. The women are left alone with each other. Sheepish looks.

LULU

I'll, uh, go and look for Margaret. Maybe she's in the kitchen.

LULU EXITS.

TARA STANDS NEXT TO VIKTORIA, who stares out into the middle distance. Tara speaks softly.

TARA

You didn't have to do that. Say that stuff about Michael.

Viktoria shrugs, still cold as ice.

TARA

I suppose we're not really friends. But I thought-- that I could trust you.

TARA WALKS AWAY. Viktoria looks just slightly regretful.

CUT TO:

YASMIN, WIPING HER TEARS ON HER SLEEVE, is trying to pull herself together. She looks at Jan, who looks weary and old.

YASMIN

Are you okay?

JAN

Huh?

YASMIN

Do you want a cup of tea?

In a kind of trance, Jan begins putting away her muffins.

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JAN

I guess I should put these silly things away. Don't know why I...

YASMIN

No, Jan, don't worry about it. Lulu was just being--

Jan shakes her head. LULU RETURNS.

LULU

No sign of her. And I looked in all the offices.

TARA

Well, I'll have quite a lot to tell her when she does turn up. Does anyone have anything to say for themselves? Hmm?

Pause.

TARA

No? Well, then. I'm going to compose an email to The Head about all this--

JAN

Last week my youngest called me a cunt.

SHOCKED SILENCE. That does it. Tara stops. EVERYONE LOOKS AT JAN, who speaks very calmly, her eyes cast down.

JAN

And Harry just... Well, it was Jonnie who said it to me. I asked him to... gosh, I don't even remember... I asked him not to leave the oven on when he comes home late, I think. And one thing led to another and he just said 'stop being such a cunt, mum'. And I felt something inside me drop onto the floor. Like it dropped down and rolled out the door. Gone. And Harry, my husband of twenty-seven years, he just... I said 'Harry! Did you hear that?'

(MORE)

JAN (CONT'D)

And he looked up from his football videos he was watching on his phone, in the armchair with his phone in front of his face like always does on his days off, he doesn't move, he sits there holding the phone with his mouth slightly open and he just looked up and he said 'I'm not getting involved.'

Beat. The other women listen, awkwardly fascinated.

JAN

And it's like since then everything's been very clear. And not in a good way. I suppose I wanted to come back to work because I thought it would make me matter again. To the people around me. But it hasn't. The boys still hate me. I'm a joke here. And on-top of everything I have to learn Microsoft bloody Excel!

Pause.

LULU

Jan, I'm sorry. I shouldn't have... It's just that you're a little...

JAN

I know. I'm 'too nice'. That's what Harry says, what everyone says. But what does that mean!? I could just be selfish and everyone would like me? I could be angry or rude or just make fun of everything. I could pretend to want nothing. Instead of needing something *so small*: just to be treated like I matter. Forget it. I feel... empty. My life is empty.

Pause.

YASMIN

...Maybe you could go on *Bake Off*?

Jan shakes her head sadly.

LULU

Look, you're not empty, Jan.
(MORE)

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LULU (CONT'D)

I mean, I know how you feel. I was just posting that stuff on Twitter to make my friends laugh. They always ask me to tell funny stories about you guys and they liked it and it made me feel... Well, the truth is that it feels good at the time but later I'm lying in bed and I want to punch them, and myself. It's so nasty. And then I think maybe that's who I am, just a nasty... woman.

Finally humbled, LULU PICKS UP ONE OF JAN'S MUFFINS AND TAKES A BIG BITE. Jan smiles.

JAN

Is it good?

LULU

(tears welling)

So... good.

Yasmin is thoughtful.

YASMIN

I can't stand up to Sonny, you're right. But it's true, it's not bad to be nice, is it? I just don't want to hurt him. Is that bad?

JAN

If you want my advice, pleasing people will just make them hate you anyway.

Yasmin registers this deeply.
Lulu finishes the muffin.

LULU

Listen, I'm sorry about the Twitter thing. All of you. I'm really sorry.

YASMIN

And I'm sleeping with his best friend--

LULU

(simultaneous)

And I need dick to come--

YASMIN AND LULU

WHAT?!

SUDDENLY, a SHARP POPPING SOUND from outside.

LULU

Oh, yeah. And I'm sorry for putting a small explosive under you car, Tara.

BEAT. They all take a breath. Everyone sort of looks at Tara.

TARA

Well, you all clearly have some personal problems, but of course that's no excuse for the level of disrespect--

YASMIN

Tara, do you have something to share? I mean, it's kind of nice...

TARA GUFFAWS LOUDLY, too loudly.

TARA

If you think--! Well! I would NEVER humiliate myself like--

BANG! AN EARSPLITTING CRACK and everything happens at once:

THEY ALL GRAB THEIR EARS AND SHUT THEIR EYES.

CAKE EXPLODES FROM VIKTORIA'S DESK. YASMIN SCREAMS.

A LONG PAUSE, RINGING IN THEIR EARS, DUST AND FLOUR FALLING THROUGH THE AIR.

LULU

WHAT THE F--UCK?

Slowly, THEY ALL EMERGE from where they've sheltered or fallen.

VIKTORIA

(seeing her cake-covered desk)

It's so messy... No, no , no!

TARA PULLS OPEN VIKTORIA'S DESK DRAWER, REVEALING THE BLASTED REMAINS OF JAN'S CAKE, which she secreted there earlier.

THEY ALL GATHER ROUND. VIKTORIA TAKES A SPOON FROM A NEARBY TEACUP AND BEGINS DIGGING THROUGH THE CAKE. Jan lets out a SIGH OF PAIN as she watches what's left of her cake destroyed.

THEN VIKTORIA FINDS IT:

LULU

Oh, shit.

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TARA
OH MY GOD.

YASMIN
It must be something else.

VIKTORIA
It is not anything else.

TARA
Right inside the Guinness and
chocolate-orange ganache...

YASMIN
What does it mean?

LULU
Means we dodged two bullets
today.

Yasmin frowns at her disapprovingly. Lulu looks apologetic.

VIKTORIA PUTS **THE BULLET** DOWN CAREFULLY ON THE DESK.

LULU
Okay so now what?

YASMIN
Look!

She points to a small HOLE IN THE WALL that separates their
office from Margaret's.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY. 14.16PM.

THE FIVE WOMEN ALL MOVING HURRIEDLY IN CROUCH POSITION DOWN
THE HALL TOWARDS MARGARET'S OFFICE.

TARA
This is ridiculous!

LULU
Shhh!

YASMIN, at the front, peeks inside Margaret's office.

YASMIN
Can't see anyone.

JAN, hand on the handle, leans into the room. Behind her,
EVERYBODY LEANS FORWARD, JAN'S HAND SLIPS AND THEY ALL FALL,
like dominoes, into the office.

INT. MARGARET'S OFFICE. AFTERNOON.
AND THEY ALL SEE IT:

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JAN
OH GOSH!

YASMIN
(hysterical)
No way! No way! Oh my god!
Aaaaaah!

LULU
Fuck.

VIKTORIA
Wow.

BORING OLD MARGARET, LEANING ALL THE WAY BACK IN HER ADJUSTABLE CHAIR, A BULLET HOLE THROUGH HER HEAD AND AN ENORMOUS SPRAY OF BLOOD COVERING BOTH HER AND THE WALL.

On the desk, near her outstretched hand, LIES A GUN.

YASMIN
Oh god!

JAN
Is it real?

LULU
Well, it works, doesn't it?

VIKTORIA
I'll go and call the police.

VIKTORIA EXITS.

Throughout this, TARA STANDS AT THE BACK OF THE ROOM, GAZING AT MARGARET'S CORPSE IN UTTER DISBELIEF.

Holding her head as though it might explode, LULU STARTS LAUGHING.

LULU
This is so INSANE! I sat right there today and she told me off and now--

YASMIN
It's unbelievable. Was she depressed?

LULU
How could you tell!?

YASMIN
Maybe she didn't do it...

LULU
There's no one else here.

Lulu laughs again.

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JAN

Lulu!

Lulu makes an apologetic gesture and calms down. TARA is scrolling on her phone.

LULU

Viktoria's already calling the police--

TARA

I'm checking my emails.

JAN

For what?

TARA

She must have sent an email.

YASMIN, fascinated and horrified by the gruesome scene, walks round to the other side of Margaret's desk, where SHE DISCOVERS SOMETHING:

YASMIN

(under her breath)

Oh no...

TARA CONTINUES OBSESSIVELY REFRESHING HER EMAIL. Jan and Lulu watch her, confused.

TARA

It doesn't make any sense!

JAN PUTS HER ARM AROUND TARA'S SHOULDERS.

JAN

It's very upsetting. You knew her a long time. And she was so *alive*.

Lulu raises an eyebrow.
VIKTORIA RETURNS.

VIKTORIA

They're on their way.

CUT TO:

YASMIN IS LOOKING DOWN AT THE SECOND DUFFEL BAG OF CASH, ON THE FLOOR AT MARGARET'S FEET. SHE'S FROZEN.

TARA

(sudden burst of anger)

IT DOESN'T MAKE ANY SENSE! SHE SAID I WAS BEING PROMOTED! WHY WOULD SHE KILL HERSELF WITHOUT SENDING AN EMAIL TO CONFIRM IT! WHAT'S GOING ON!? WHAT IS GOING ON!?

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Jan and Viktoria desperately try to calm Tara down, guiding her onto a nearby chair.

LULU

Tara, it's possible she had other things on her mind.

YASMIN

Umm... guys. I think I might know... something.

THEY LOOK AT HER. SHE PICKS UP THE BAG OF CASH AND DUMPS IT IN FRONT OF THEM. THEY ALL STARE.

VIKTORIA

What on earth...?

LULU

Guns. And money. Either Margaret was filming a rap video in here or she was someone very different than we thought.

YASMIN

The money, it's this gang, they've been stashing... in the school. I... found it and I moved one of the bags but then Ian found me and I had to put it in the Science Supply Cupboard. This must be the other one. Margaret must be... I don't know... (gasp) Maybe she's the bedazzler too!

Beat.

LULU

Embezzler. Yeah, I guess she wasn't as super-boring as she looked. Respect.

JAN

Well, I'm not sure that really makes sense. Why would she--

TARA

Nooo!

In one movement, TARA FLINGS HERSELF AT THE CORPSE. THE OTHERS RACE TO PULL HER BACK BEFORE SHE THROTTLES IT.

TARA

We didn't even do The Handover! We didn't-- She was supposed to-- What about Bromley?! The merger! It won't happen. We'll have to scale down, there'll be cuts. Do you realise what this means, you idiots? She's ruined everything!

YASMIN

Tara, calm down. It's not important.

TARA

It's true, okay! IS THIS WHAT YOU WANT TO HEAR!? I haven't met Michael in real life! We've been engaged for two years! We haven't met! We haven't had sex! Just... pictures. I haven't had sex with ANYONE! Go on, LAUGH!

Nobody does.

LULU GRABS TARA BY THE ARMS.

LULU

It's okay, Tara. I understand.
It's okay.

Tara, beginning to calm down, stares into Lulu's eyes.

TARA

I am NOT some pathetic idiot being tricked, okay? I know what my life is. Okay? I know!

LULU

(looking at the bag of cash)
I guess we all do.

VIKTORIA

(looking at the bag of cash)
But maybe things don't have to stay the same. Maybe there are other ways.

JAN

(looking at the bag of cash)
I'm so tired of it. Being me.
I've been praying just for something to happen, anything... else.

YASMIN

(looking at the bag of cash)
Me too. I don't want to be like--
(looks at Jan). I don't want to take care of Sonny anymore. I mean, what about me? What... I want.

TARA

What are you all talking about!?

JAN
 (suddenly firm, inspired)
 You know what we're talking
 about. You said it yourself,
 Margaret's gone. What will happen
 now.... It's up to us.

Beat.
 JAN TURNS TO YASMIN.

JAN
 You remember where you hid the
 other bag?

YASMIN NODS.

JAN
 Maybe you put both bags in there
 instead of one?

YASMIN
 ...Maybe I did.

VIKTORIA
 Police will be here soon, I'll go
 and *greet them*.

LULU laughs delightedly, these women!

YASMIN PICKS UP THE BAG, LULU HELPS HER.

TARA
 STOP!

THEY ALL TURN, POISED AT THE DOOR. LONG PAUSE.

TARA
 It needs to be wiped down first.

They smile.

SUDDENLY, THE SOUND OF SIRENS IN THE DISTANCE. THEY HOP TO
 IT.

CUT TO:

TARA AND LULU wiping down the bag.

YASMIN hiding it in the cupboard with the others.

YASMIN wiping down the padlock she opened earlier.

VIKTORIA waiting for the cops on the steps of the building.

The others appear behind her. Each of them looks stronger
 than they have all day. Yasmin squeezes Lulu's hand. They all
 suppress manic smiles.

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TIMESTAMP READS: 15.01pm

THE SIRENS GET CLOSER AND CLOSER UNTIL FINALLY TWO POLICE CARS CRUISE INTO THE CAR PARK.

CUT TO:
The last loose thread, they haven't thought of it, but there it is:

CLOSE UP:
THE BROMLEY MANAGER, SLUMPED AGAINST THE BATHROOM WALL, A BULLET HOLE BETWEEN HER EYES. Green paper towels strewn around her. Perhaps this is a little more dangerous than they realise...

END