

HOME OFFICE

A Ten-Minute Play

Donald Loftus

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HOME OFFICE

Cast of Characters

MR. BEN STONE: AGE: 50'S Senior Vice President, G.M.
A pompous, angry executive.

MS. JANE CASE: AGE: 40'S Human Resource Director
A prim & proper executive.

WILLIAM BENNETT: AGE: 20'S Associate Manager, Marketing
A polite, nervous African
American or Hispanic entry-
level employee.

HOME OFFICE

SETTING: The New York City office of Human Resource Director, JANE CASE. There is an executive desk, an executive desk chair, and two visitor chairs. On the desk is an envelope and a telephone with an intercom button.

AT RISE: MS. CASE sits holding her head as MR. STONE angrily paces and rants.

TIME: A Friday afternoon.

MR. STONE

(Angrily ranting)

I'm not sure you understand the gravity of this situation!

MS. CASE

No, I do understand...

MR. STONE

This is an enormous violation of corporate policy...

MS. CASE

I realize that...

MR. STONE

An astounding dereliction of duty...

MS. CASE

I know! Believe me I know!

MR. STONE

You know! Then tell me...how the fuck did this happen!

MS. CASE

Mr. Stone... Benjamin... please watch your language! The staff can hear every word...

MR. STONE

The staff can go fuck themselves! My language is hardly the problem here...Ms. Case...Jane!

(SHE now whispers with a condescending tone)

MS. CASE

The staff can also call the anonymous whistle-blower number at corporate and get your ass fired. You do realize that's what happened to Espino. London has no tolerance for foul language in the workplace.

MR. STONE

And are we presuming that the same H.R. staff that created this mess is going to tattle on me for my potty mouth via the "snitch line"? I doubt they know how to dial a phone.

MS. CASE

We cannot blame the H.R. associates for this error...

MR. STONE

Well Ms. Case...it was either the Human Resource associates that fucked up...or it was you, the Director of Human Resources. How is London is going to feel about that!?!

MS. CASE

I don't see the point of pointing fingers. Besides, while this is all shocking and disturbing... at the end of the day, it's not really that big a deal.

MR. STONE

What!?! Are you kidding me!?! It is a huge deal. If word of this gets out...London will have both of our jobs. They are never going to understand how an executive in this uptight, buttoned-down and highly neurotic corporation, could have hired someone without executing a rigorous background check? The corporate guidelines are very clear on this...

MS. CASE

Look, it happened at the peak of our busiest season. We were in a bind. And it was a low-level position. It won't happen again. Now drop it! Please!

MR. STONE

Okay, but just one more thing. Beyond putting both of our careers at risk... whomever **is** responsible also put you, me and the entire team in great deal of danger. Seriously, we know absolutely nothing about this guy!

MS. CASE

They say he is a sweet kid. He certainly isn't dangerous!

MR. STONE

He could be a psycho for all we know! Hiding under a desk one early morning...just waiting for us to enter. Just waiting to do us all in!

MS. CASE

Well, it will all be over soon. We'll handle it... as we always do. We'll take care of it and no one will be the wiser. Now, just take a breath...

(After a beat)

By the way...was what tipped you off? What made you want us to investigate this mess in the first place?

MR. STONE

Last Monday night...like nearly every night, I was the last one out of here. I used the men's room before I turned out the lights and locked the door. The men's room was fine.

MS. CASE

What do you mean?

MR. STONE

Hang on. The next day I was the first one in...like nearly every morning. Charlie, down in the lobby...you know...the old, bearded, fat guy at the front desk, says to me, "Geez Mr. Stone, you're working 'em all night up there!"

MS. CASE

Meaning what?

MR. STONE

Who the fuck knows? I rarely comprehend anything Fat Charlie has to say...so I smiled at him...gave him a nod and the thumbs up signal... all the while thinking to myself, "what an asshole you are you fat fuck you!"

MS. CASE

Nice.

MR. STONE

So, I get up to the twenty-six floor, unlock the door, turn on the lights and pop into the men's room for a minute. But now the men's room floor is soaking wet. I thought maybe a pipe was leaking...but no...this was like a sudsy... soapy water... like little kids had been playing in the sink or something.

MR. STONE (Continued)

So, I go back down to see Fat Fucking Charlie. I ask him if he noticed anyone on our floor last night and he says, "Just the kid...the one who was working all night. I asked if he knew his name and he said, "No, but he used his security pass to get in. It must be recorded in the system. And the rest is history.

(The intercom buzzes. MS. CASE pushes a button on it)

MS. CASE

Yes Sonia?

VOICE ON THE INTERCOM

Mr. Bennett is her to see you Ms. Case.

MR. STONE

You're sure you want me to stay for this?

MS. CASE

Abso-fucking-lutely.

(Into the intercom)

Send him in Sonia.

(MR. STONE remains standing, perhaps leaning on the windowsill bookcase behind MS. CASE, who sits at her desk. The door opens and WILLIAM enters. WILLIAM is nervous but very polite and pleasant)

MS. CASE (Continued)

Good morning. You must be William...

(SHE extends her hand. HE shakes her hand)

WILLIAM

Yes, Ms. Case. I met you on my first day...in the orientation... but I guess you don't remember.

MS. CASE

No, I'm afraid I...

WILLIAM

No matter. I'm sure you meet a lot of people...

MS. CASE

And this is Mr. Stone, our Senior Vice President and General Manager...

WILLIAM

Oh, yes, I know who Mr. Stone is.

MR. STONE

Have we also met?

WILLIAM

No but you are the first face seen in the opening video shown at that same orientation session. You were welcoming us to the team...well, virtually. I mean via the video...

MR. STONE

Ah right.

WILLIAM

How do you do sir?

MR. STONE

Fine. Thank you. And, how are you?

WILLIAM

Well, frankly, I am a little nervous.

MR. STONE

Nervous? What do you have to be nervous about?

WILLIAM

Well, it's not everyday someone like me...

MR. STONE

Someone like you?

WILLIAM

I mean it's not every day, someone at my level, gets called upstairs. And then when I entered Miss Case's office...and I saw the man from the video was here...well, Sir, it is bound to make someone like me a little jittery.

MS. CASE

Well, don't be nervous. We just want to have a little talk.

WILLIAM

Well, okay then...

MS. CASE

So, William...how long has it been since you joined us?

WILLIAM

Ah, let's see. It will be like six weeks... next Monday.

MS. CASE

And how is it going for you so far?

WILLIAM

It's going great.

MS. CASE

Yes? How so?

WILLIAM

How so? Well, I love the team. I love the project we are working on. And I guess...I just love working here.

MS. CASE

Well good.

WILLIAM

And I think Marge, my manager... I think she likes my work.

MR. STONE

What makes you think that?

WILLIAM

She has said some nice things to me... very complimentary.

MS. CASE

Yes, Ms. Haas says she is quite happy with your work.

WILLIAM

You've talked to Margaret...I mean Ms. Haas...about me...

MS. CASE

Yes, of course. We regularly discuss the employees with their supervisors. Does it surprise you?

WILLIAM

No, I guess not.

MR. STONE

We did have one surprise regarding you...well more than one actually.

(MS. CASE shoots MR. STONE an angry glare)

WILLIAM

Yes?

MS. CASE

What Mr. Stone is referring to...well, we received a report from the security department concerning your hours.

WILLIAM

My hours? But I haven't been late one single day. I arrive before nine every morning...usually around eight forty-five and I leave at five o'clock with everybody else.

MS. CASE

But then you apparently come back later in the evening. Security did tell us that you do...as you said...leave with the others at 5 PM. But apparently you then come back...

WILLIAM

(Nervously talking faster)

Ah yes, I can explain that. You see...I really do love it here...and I can do the work...but sometimes...as it is still new to me...I can't get it all done in eight hours. I don't want Margaret to be unhappy with me...or think it is too much for me...so, sometimes, I come back when everyone is gone...and I finish the work.

MR. STONE

I am surprised the work is so challenging for you because it seems to be exactly the kind of thing you majored in at Hunter College and exactly what you did in your last job, at your last company...I believe it was Unilever.

WILLIAM

Yes. Yes, it is very similar.

MS. CASE

So, I know you are living with your mother in Brooklyn.

WILLIAM

Yes, but just until I can raise save enough cash to get my own place in Manhattan...

MS. CASE

So, do you go all the way home to Brooklyn and then come all the way back in the middle of the night?

WILLIAM

Well, it's not the middle...

MR. STONE

We understand you come back as late as one in the morning.

WILLIAM

Yes, um yes, I guess do. It's okay though. I don't mind it.

MS. CASE

And how often...like how many times a week do you do this?

WILLIAM

Oh, I don't know...I guess like once...maybe twice a week.

MR. STONE

(Firmly)

Let stop this right there.

MS. CASE

Ben...Mr. Stone, please. I've got this...

MR. STONE

No! Enough cat and mouse shit! William, according to the security department, it's not once or twice a week...it is every single night since you started.

WILLIAM

I don't think it's that much...

MR. STONE

And you don't race home to your dear old mama's house in Brooklyn each night at five... because that address in Brooklyn does not exist.

MS. CASE

We also know the woman you listed as your mother... your emergency contact person...doesn't exist...

WILLIAM

But I can explain that...

MR. STONE

And we do understand the reasons why the work is a bit challenging for you... but it would be, would it since...

WILLIAM

Since I never went to Hunter. I never worked at Unilever.

MR. STONE

Okay, let's just get this over...

MS. CASE

William, we have discovered that you are living here. You leave with everyone at five and then you come back after we've all gone to bed.

MR. STONE

You shave and shower in the men's room...and you've turned your filing cabinet behind your desk...which is meant to store company documents into your own personal dresser. Top drawer... underwear and socks. Second drawer, shaving products, deodorants...

MS. CASE

So, we have to assume you are also sleeping here. We just don't know where you are sleeping.

MR. STONE

So, what is it? On the floor? On the conference room table?

WILLIAM

Neither. I sleep on the couch in your office.

MR. STONE

You what!?!

WILLIAM

(HE breaks down in tears)

Okay. Oh my God, I am so sorry. I am so sorry.

MS. CASE

William, are you in fact homeless?

WILLIAM

Yes, I am. Oh Jesus. I'm sorry. I didn't know what else...

MS. CASE

William, I am sorry too.

WILLIAM

So, are you going to fire me?

MS. CASE

Well...yes William. I am afraid we are going to have to.

WILLIAM

But you said I was doing a good job. Margaret said...

MS. CASE

I'm sorry...but the job has pre-requisites. A college degree...and prior experience is required...

WILLIAM

But you said I was doing well...maybe those pre-requisites aren't really necessary. Ms. Case, isn't there anything...

MS. CASE

William, I am sorry...

WILLIAM

Mr. Stone...

MR STONE

We cannot have employees working here that we cannot trust.

WILLIAM

But you can trust me... I swear.

MR STONE

You lied to us... and not just once...

WILLIAM

So if I had just told you when I interviewed...if I had just said when you asked for my home address...if I had just said, "Oh, yeah...well... you see...I'm homeless"... are you telling me you would have hired me?

MS. CASE

Unfortunately, we'll never know because you didn't give us the chance.

(MS. CASE hands WILLIAM an envelope)

Here are your earnings for last week and this week. Security is right outside my office and they will escort you out. I wish you the best William.

(SHE extends her hand to shake his hand. HE doesn't take it. He exits)

(BLACKOUT)

END OF PLAY