

EXT. LAW OFFICES - MORNING

London. The offices are slick; thirty floors of tinted green glass. A discreet plaque puts you on notice that you are entering the law offices of Kish Pearson LLP, and it's going to cost you.

Various SUITED MEN and WOMEN are arriving for work.

INT. LAW OFFICES - MORNING

The reception area is oozing with brushed marble (real), giant orchids (real) and attractive RECEPTIONISTS with tremendous breasts (real).

RORY (V.O.)

When Gavin Cobb was stabbed to death, I'll be honest with you, we couldn't give a fuck.

INT. OFFICE CANTEEN - MORNING

A handsome man in his mid-30's is paying for a cappuccino by pressing his ID card against an electronic box. He still has his coat on. This is RORY CAMPBELL, dry-witted, contained, self-confident but not arrogant. He will be our narrator throughout.

RORY (V.O.)

He was a Finance partner with gaping nostrils and ferocious onion breath. Fuck him, he was horrible and we were determined to find his death hilarious.

INT. LITIGATION DEPARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Rory steps out of a half-full lift. A sign identifies this as the "Litigation and Dispute Resolution" department.

He walks around the central secretarial bay to his office, nodding hello to a couple of SECRETARIES.

RORY (V.O.)

We tried to come up with jokes about the stabbing but we were pretty busy so just kept repeating variations on him being done over like a corn on the cob.

INT. RORY/JEREMY/ALFRED'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Rory approaches his empty, glass-fronted office. Names (misspelled) have been stencilled onto the glass, one above the other in order of seniority: "Rory Cambplel/Jeeremy Gold/Alfred Mujuru".

He enters and boots up his computer, then hangs up his coat. He sits back at his desk and shuffles through his mail, one foot resting up on an open drawer.

Overstuffed binders are wedged into shelves; documents stacked in heaps on the floor. A complicated corporate structure has been sketched on the white board, together with other random data.

RORY (V.O.)

Jeremy said something about him choking on his salty Cobb nuts. We didn't understand it but we laughed anyway.

(beat)

But when we heard that Chris Dunnigan had had his skull caved in with a stapler, well, the mood changed.

INT. RORY/JEREMY/ALFRED'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Rory's office has become the social hub as usual. In the corner, sitting at a slightly smaller desk, is a meek black guy in his early 20's. This is ALFRED MUJURU, a petrified and pretty hopeless trainee lawyer.

Leaning against the bookshelf is AMY TAO, early-30's, an Australian girl of Chinese extract. Tough, attractive, poker-faced. Erratically pacing the room is KATE PARSELL, early-30's. She is attractive but you can virtually see the emotional madness leaking out of her.

KATE

That's bullshit, Rory! Any one of us could be next.

A man strides into the room, carrying an umbrella. This is JEREMY GOLD (mid-30's, Jewish, selfish, loud).

JEREMY

(interrupting, to Rory)
Did you hear?

AMY

What's that?

JEREMY

Are you kidding me?

KATE

Of course we heard, Jeremy.

Jeremy throws his umbrella in the corner and takes out a little Jewish hat from his desk drawer. He has a whole selection and today's kippah is red with a Nike swoosh and the tag line: "Just Jew It". He's not orthodox, he just wears it in the office to irritate certain partners.

JEREMY
(buzzed)
With a fucking hole puncher!

RORY
I thought it was a stapler.

JEREMY
You couldn't kill someone with a stapler.

AMY
'Course you could.

JEREMY
Rubbish.

KATE
One of those big ones you could.

AMY
The 100 pager.

RORY
That big thing?

Amy nods.

ALFRED
That only does 50 pages.

Alfred, who has been silently observing as befits his rank, is comprehensively ignored.

JEREMY
But it would be too heavy. You couldn't hold it properly to get a decent...

Jeremy mimes holding a large object and burying it deep into Amy's skull. He is genuinely interested.

JEREMY
What do those things weigh?
(to Alfred, re: computer search)
Look up Staples.

Alfred urgently starts typing on his computer.

RORY
(quietly, standing him down)
Alfred. It's alright.

A young attractive woman in her mid-20's enters holding a small binder. This is HELEN CURZON.

HELEN
(to Rory, handing him the
binder)
Thanks.

RORY
Okay.

Helen turns to leave.

JEREMY
Helen, do you think you could kill
someone with a stapler?

HELEN
(not breaking stride)
If I had to.

JEREMY
No, I meant...

But she has disappeared, only to be replaced by a man in his
early 40's - KEN PAYCE, partner. He has a weak face and
feeble voice. He pulls an overly sympathetic expression to
reflect these "difficult times".

PAYCE
Morning.

EVERYONE
Hello / Ken / Alright.

RORY (V.O.)
Ken Payce. You always know
something's up when Ken's been
dispatched, appearing at your door
with that stupid expression, like a
gerbil trying to force out a shit
that's too big for its body.

PAYCE
Terrible news.

EVERYONE
Yes / yeah / awful.

PAYCE
I hope none of you are, you
know,...

JEREMY
Crapping ourselves?

PAYCE
Well, Jeremy, I was going to say
something a little more...

AMY

I don't get this? Why should I be worried? Who the hell would want to kill me?

RORY

(pause)

I would.

KATE

Yep.

JEREMY

(clicking fingers)

Like that.

KATE

(to Amy)

At least you're married.

AMY

The relevance being...?

KATE

You have someone who'll miss you, mourn for you, when you're dead. He'll be there at the funeral, tearful yet stoic. Perhaps unshaven because he just couldn't face seeing all your things in the bathroom. God, you're so lucky, you had the best funeral.

AMY

He didn't even shave?

RORY

Calm down, Kate. You're not going to be next. Ken is.

Payce laughs but then sees Rory's deadpan expression.

PAYCE

What? Why do you say that?

RORY

Shit. I thought you knew.

PAYCE

Knew what?

RORY

Damn.

JEREMY

To be honest, Ken, that's what I'd heard.

AMY

Me too.

RORY

Really sorry, mate.

PAYCE

Well, I'm sure...I mean, you don't just...

Jeremy has picked up a marker pen and is slowly drawing a squeaky line through Payce's name which, along with other partners' names, has been written on the white board together with betting odds.

JEREMY

And at nineteen to one. That's really unlucky.

Payce struggles to get his head around this.

PAYCE

I don't understand. Why...who said this?

RORY

I'm sorry Ken but I've really got to get on.

Amy, Jeremy and Kate filter out.

AMY

(to Payce)
Good luck.

JEREMY

(shaking Payce's hand)
Thanks Ken. For everything.

Rory dials a number.

KATE

(to Amy, re: Payce)
Even his funeral will be better.

PAYCE

(to Rory)
But just tell me...

Rory puts a finger to his lips, silencing Payce, then pointing to the phone by his ear.

RORY

(into phone)
Hello? Yes, Tom Nagel please.

PAYCE

Of course. Yes, okay.

Payce stares hopelessly at Alfred, who smiles weakly.

© Simeon Goulden 2023