

**SCENE 1. EXT./INT. OFFICE – DAY 1 [0915]**

A DISHEVELLED BAG LADY SAUNTERS ALONG A CITY STREET. SHE SCOWLS AT PASSERS BY ON THEIR WAY TO WORK. SHE TAKES REGULAR SWIGS FROM A BOTTLE CONCEALED WITHIN A BROWN PAPER BAG.

SHE ARRIVES AT THE FRONT DOOR OF AN OFFICE BUILDING. SHE ENTERS. SHE CLIMBS A COUPLE OF FLIGHTS OF STAIRS. SHE ENTERS THE LADIES' TOILET. AFTER A SHORT WHILE A SMARTLY DRESSED WOMAN EMERGES FROM THE TOILET. SHE SMOOTHES HER HAIR DOWN AND CHECKS HER APPEARANCE IN THE MIRROR THERE. SHE APPROACHES THE DOOR TO THE MAIN OFFICE ACCOMMODATION, BUT HESITATES OUTSIDE. SHE GLANCES AROUND TO MAKE SURE NO ONE IS WATCHING AND THEN SHE TAKES A DRINK FROM A BOTTLE WHICH IS CONTAINED IN A BROWN PAPER BAG.

SHE ENTERS THE OFFICE. **BRIAN** IS TALKING IN A BROAD YORKSHIRE ACCENT ON A TELEPHONE HEADSET. SITTING OPPOSITE HIM ARE **SAM** AND **JULIE**. THEY ARE SMOOCHING.

**BRIAN:**

(INTO PHONE) I'm sorry, sir, but you've come through to the German office. (PAUSE) Well, you might have dialled the UK number but somehow you've got routed through to over here.

**SAM** AND **JULIE** ARE STILL KISSING AND CUDDLING.

**JULIE:**

(TO SAM) So then what happened?

**SAM:**

Well, I said to the girl at the till, "You should drop your prices – you know – like you do with the reduced items."

**JULIE:**

How did she react to that? (SAM SHRUGS) What – you don't remember?

**SAM:**

'Course I remember. I'm just showing you her reaction. So I said to her, "Well, if you can sell some items at reduced prices then you can sell the lot at reduced prices."

**JULIE:**

So what happened then? (SAM SHRUGS. JULIE FROWNS)

**SAM:**

So I said, 'Well, I'm going to persuade shoppers to only buy stuff at reduced prices.' And that's just what I did.

**JULIE:**

How?

**SAM:**

Oh, I just hung around outside the shop and had a word with people as they came in. They were all for the idea. Soon we had loads of people who waited until stuff was close to its sell-by date before they bought it.

**BRIAN:**

(INTO PHONE) Well, yes I can speak a little English. You know, they teach us a few phrases so we can deal with situations like this. (PAUSE) I can understand some of what you're saying, but it's much better if you contact the UK office. You'll find it a lot easier to converse with someone who speaks your mother tongue. (PAUSE) What's that? You're from Batley? I were born near there. (PAUSE) No. We moved to Leipzig when I were a baby. (PAUSE) Mmm. Maybe I did subconsciously pick up a little of the local accent, even though I were only 6 months old when we moved. (PAUSE) Well, thanks for the call, sir. (PAUSE) What's that? Oh, I couldn't agree more, sir. Up the Tykes!

**BRIAN PRESSES A BUTTON ON HIS PHONE TO HANG UP THE CALL AND TAKES OFF HIS HEADSET.**

**SAM:**

Soon the shop was selling all its stuff at reduced prices. But not for long.

**JULIE:**

So they put their prices back up again?

**SAM:**

No. They went bust. The shop is now an Estate Agents.

JAN BELCHES BY THE DOOR. THEY ALL  
LOOK UP. SHE MAKES HER WAY  
SHEEPISHLY OVER TO HER DESK.

**JAN:**

The weekly meeting starts in five minutes.

**JULIE:**

So where do you shop now?

**SAM:**

It's a real pain. The nearest shop is in town ten miles  
away. The petrol costs far outweigh the savings I  
make by shopping in town.

**JULIE:**

Bet you feel a bit stupid now.

**SAM:**

Not entirely. I'm thinking of buying a new place so  
the Estate Agents will come in handy.

THE PHONE RINGS. JULIE ANSWERS IT.

**JULIE:**

(INTO PHONE) Drake's Software – it works you  
know! (PAUSE) It's not working? I see. (PAUSE) It  
says, "error 17"? (PAUSE) Let me consult our  
extensive on-line knowledge base.

SHE PUTS THE CALLER ON HOLD AND  
TURNS TO SAM.

Sam, Sam! What's error 17?

**SAM:**

Err... (HE SHRUGS)

**JULIE:**

(INTO PHONE) Sorry, madam, the system is a little slow this morning. I won't keep you long. (TO

**BRIAN**) Brian – error 17 – any ideas?

**BRIAN** SCREWS HIS FACE UP IN THOUGHT FOR A FEW MOMENTS. HIS FACE THEN LIGHTS UP BRIEFLY BEFORE HE FROWNS AND SHAKES HIS HEAD. AT THIS POINT **MAUD** THE CLEANER COMES OVER AND PUTS ON A HEADSET.

**MAUD:**

Hello, madam. Error 17 means your configuration file is missing. It should be in the system directory. Could you please search for it? (PAUSE) It's in one of the system sub-folders? Ah – that's the problem, then. Simply move it up a level to the system root directory and restart the application. (PAUSE) You're in now? Glad to be of service. Goodbye.

THE OTHERS TREAT MAUD'S INTERVENTION AS A COMPLETELY NORMAL OCCURRENCE AND DON'T REACT AT ALL. MAUD TURNS TO SAM.

By the way, I used to be the early morning cleaner at that shop you caused to go bust.

**BRIAN:**

Not Hobson's in Branfield?

**MAUD:**

That's the place.

**BRIAN:**

I were the delivery van driver at Hobson's. Then one day the gaffer called me over and laid me off – just like that! I never thought I'd meet the bugger responsible. I've a good mind to –

**JAN:**

Ok, people! Gather round and let's get started.

SAM, JULIE AND BRIAN ASSEMBLE AROUND JAN'S DESK. MAUD CONTINUES WITH HER CLEANING DUTIES.

Now then – weekly reports.

**SAM** WAFTS **JAN'S** ALCOHOLIC FUMES AWAY. SHE POPS A MINT INTO HER MOUTH. **SAM, JULIE AND BRIAN** ALL WAIT A MINUTE WHILE SHE EATS IT, EXCHANGING KNOWING GLANCES WITH ONE ANOTHER. EVENTUALLY **JAN** THEATRICALY SWALLOWS THE LAST PIECE OF MINT.

Right. I'll start. Firstly, I'd like to scotch the rumour about the company being taken over by a Russian outfit. (PAUSE) Oh. You hadn't heard that one? Good, then there's no need to say any more about it. Secondly, there is no truth in the rumour that this office is soon to relocate to Germany. I believe you were concerned about that one, Julie.

**JULIE:**

No, I wasn't. But I am now. This is the first I've heard of it!

**SAM:**

So the German move rumour – that none of us knew about – is in fact groundless?

**JAN:**

Totally. And there is also no truth in the rumour that I am relocating to headquarters in New York.

**JAN NOTICES A 'NEW YORK FOR TOURISTS' BOOK ON HER DESK. SHE HASTILY COVERS IT UP.**

Next. I've had a few complaints about the level of service provided by the Helpdesk. Specifically, I've had a complaint that on Monday afternoon a customer spent two hours trying to get through but kept getting the busy message.

**BRIAN:**

Ah. I can explain that one. Julie were out getting some cream for a rash she found while having a bath at the weekend. I think it were similar to that rash you had, Sam, a couple of weeks ago. Anyway, Sam had to go with her 'cos she were too embarrassed to ask the chemist for it. And I had the runs something rotten.

**MAUD LOOKS UP FROM ACROSS THE ROOM WHERE SHE IS EMPTYING A BIN.**

**MAUD:**

That reminds me. We need some more toilet roll for the Gents. Oh, and some stronger air freshener wouldn't go amiss.

**JAN:**

Ok. Fine. There were some other complaints about our unprofessional phone manner and poor technical knowledge.

**JAN'S PHONE RINGS. SHE PICKS IT UP.**

(INTO PHONE) Drake's Software – yes, what is it?

(PAUSE) It does what? (PAUSE) You can't do what?

(PAUSE) Well, turn it off and back on again and if that doesn't fix it ... oh, I don't know ... just give it a good kick or something.

**JAN SLAMS THE PHONE DOWN.**

Now, as you know, Chuck Drake is coming over next week. Julie, I want you to ensure all his personal needs are catered for.

**BRIAN WINKS AT JULIE. SAM LOOKS DISTINCTLY UNIMPRESSED.**

For example, can you arrange the hotel?

**BRIAN:**

Make sure it's a double bed.

**JAN:**

And check what Chuck wants to do about evening meals.

**BRIAN:**

Better make it dinner for two in his room - with oysters.

**JAN:**

Oh – and could you arrange the transfer from the airport?

**BRIAN:**

How about a transfer straight to Julie's flat?

**JAN:**

Above all, we must avoid a repeat of last year's fiasco, where Chuck was booked into a hotel room above a lap-dancing club, and one of the club's guests somehow managed to get into Chuck's room in the middle of the night. It left Chuck with a very bitter taste in his mouth

**BRIAN:**

If Julie plays her cards right she could well end up having a bitter taste in her mouth.

**SAM KICKS BRIAN UNDER THE DESK.**

**JAN:**

Now then, Brian. Can I have your report?

**BRIAN IS BUSILY RUBBING HIS INJURED SHIN, BUT QUICKLY RECOVERS AND STARTS READING FROM A PIECE OF PAPER IN HIS HAND.**

**BRIAN:**

Well, now. I've answered 72 calls this week and -.

**JAN:**

According to my call-logging stats you only answered three, and one of those was a wrong number.

**BRIAN:**

Well, I might've counted some twice, by mistake.

You see, the call-logger crashed last night and -.

**JAN:**

Brian, if you think you can duck out of this -.

**BRIAN:**

Nice one, Jan!

**JAN:**

What??

**BRIAN:**

You know – Drake's – 'duck out of this one' – very good!

**JAN:**

Brian! This is serious. The logger did not crash and you are blatantly lying to me!

**MAUD LOOKS OVER FROM WHERE SHE IS DUSTING A LARGE TOY DUCK, WHICH IS SITTING ON A COMPUTER MONITOR**

**MAUD:**

He's right, Miss Buckle. I was tidying the machine room last night and noticed an empty bottle of Southern Comfort lying flat on the call-logging computer. It had obviously spilled its contents onto the hard disk. So I took the machine apart, replaced the hard disk and restored the data from the backup tape. The thing is, though, I reckon someone had mislabelled the tape. The one I used had yesterday's date on it but it must have been from last week. The date was really hard to read – almost like whoever wrote the label had been drunk when they did it.

**JAN:**

Well, obviously, I'll need to ... err ... look into this.

**BRIAN:**

So, Maud, the disk was swimming in booze was it?

D'you get it, Jan?

**JAN:**

Yes, thank you, Brian.

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**SCENE 2. INT. OFFICE – DAY 1 [1000]**

**BRIAN** IS GETTING A DRINK FROM THE COFFEE MACHINE. HE NOTICES A BOTTLE MARKED "J" ON TOP OF THE MACHINE. HE REACHES FOR IT, UNSCREWS THE TOP AND HAS A SNIFF. HE RECOILS SLIGHTLY.

**SAM:**

What is she on this week, then?

**BRIAN:**

Southern Comfort, I reckon.

**SAM:**

An American whisky, eh? That figures. So, Brian, do you think there's any truth in this rumoured move to Germany?

**BRIAN:**

Well, the style of football over there would suit 'im, I reckon. Plus – he's already tried England and Spain, so he probably fancies giving it a go somewhere else now. I mean, it's not as if he'll struggle with the relocation expenses, is it? I wouldn't mind his money, y'know. Can you imagine it: being able to afford any car you like and having all the birds coming on to you. Mmmm... I could definitely handle that, me.

**SAM:**

Errr ... I was talking about the office move. What the bloody hell did you think I was talking about?

**BRIAN:**

Oh, was you? Right, yes, of course ... the office  
move ... hmmm.

**SAM:**

My guess is they're hoping none of us will want to  
go, so they can then pay us off and get rid of us. But  
me and Julie had been thinking about living in  
Germany, anyway, so this would be a golden  
opportunity. We'd get our relocation paid for and  
have a job to go to. Couldn't be better.

**BRIAN:**

Eee – that's a coincidence!

**SAM:**

What is?

**BRIAN:**

Well, both you and Julie wanting to live in Germany.  
Do you reckon your girlfriend will want to go? I  
mean, she might not like pasta and olives.

**SAM:**

Julie *is* my girlfriend, and are you sure you aren't  
thinking about Italy?

**BRIAN:**

Eee – that's a coincidence! Fancy your girlfriend being called Julie an' all. Next you'll be telling me that your Julie had a rash down below like our Julie did.

**SAM:**

Brian, I -.

ENTER **JULIE.**

**JULIE:**

Hi, Sam. Hi, Brian. What are you two talking about then?

**BRIAN:**

Your rash-.

**SAM:**

Decision ... errr ... agreeing to look after Chuck.

**JULIE:**

Why is that so strange? I might score some brownie points.

**BRIAN**

It'll be Chuck who scores, more like.

**SAM:**

But I mean, you might have to get up really early to go to the airport. We wouldn't be able to ... you know ... like we usually do first thing in the morning.

**JULIE**

I'm sure you'll cope without me, Sam. Anyway, must get back to the coal-face.

EXIT **JULIE.**

**BRIAN**

I s'pose she were referring to that neck massage Julie gives you each morning at work. Well, I'll do it for you instead if y'like.

JAN APPEARS BEHIND SAM. HE IS NOT AWARE OF HER PRESENCE.

**SAM**

Great. Thanks, Brian. But I need a massage from you about as much as I need old distillery-breath breathing her one hundred percent proof fumes all over me.

**JAN**

Having a nice chat are we?

**SAM:**

Oh, Jan, we were just discussing the upgrade and saying how great it will be.

**JAN**

Well, I suggest you take your drinks back to your desks and continue the conversation there. And when you've finished I want you both to start on the documentation. I was going to get our usual agency to do it but as you're both so keen you can get stuck into it instead. And I don't want to see either of you back at this machine again this morning – caffeine is an addictive drug, you know.

**SAM AND BRIAN HEAD BACK TO THEIR DESKS. JAN PICKS HER SOUTHERN COMFORT BOTTLE OFF THE TOP OF THE MACHINE. SHE TAKES ONE SWIFT SWIG, CHECKS THAT NO ONE IS AROUND AND THEN TAKES ANOTHER. SHE STARTS TO PUT THE BOTTLE BACK BUT THEN INSTEAD POURS SOME INTO HER COFFEE. HER MOBILE PHONE RINGS WITH A STAR SPANGLED BANNER TONE AS SHE'S POURING. SHE SPILLS SOME AS SHE SEARCHES FOR HER PHONE.**

**JAN:**

(INTO PHONE) Jan Buckle, Drake's Software – it works, you know – well – sometimes anyway.

(PAUSE) Chuck? Oh, yes, hi. (PAUSE) No, I was just having a quick drinkie. I mean drink. Of coffee.

Decaf. No sugar either. (PAUSE) Yes, of course

everything is ready for your visit. Julie will pick you up from the airport. (PAUSE) Well, I hadn't really noticed her figure. (PAUSE) Well, yes, they are quite big I suppose. (PAUSE) Well, I couldn't really comment about her underwear. (PAUSE) Is she a Goan, did you say? I don't think she's from India at all. She was born in Cleethorpes if memory serves me. (PAUSE) Ah – I see. Sorry – I misheard. In that case I really don't know. (PAUSE) I don't think her boyfriend would agree to that. (PAUSE) Yes, rest assured the accommodation is all arranged. The hotel is the best in the area. (PAUSE) Yes, I believe your room has a private Jacuzzi. (PAUSE) Err ... well, I'm sure two would fit in it. (PAUSE) No. You'll be pleased to hear that it's nowhere near the awful lap-dancing club. (PAUSE) Sorry. I thought you'd be pleased. (PAUSE) Yes, I'm sure the hotel could arrange a taxi for you. (PAUSE) Ok, well we all look forward to seeing you next week. Listen, Chuck, do you have any more news about New York? (PAUSE) In a month's time? Excellent. That gives me time to sort things out here before leaving. I'll miss the place of course, but NY's where it's at! (PAUSE) Oh, no – they know nothing about the move to Germany, and don't know you're popping over there next week.

(PAUSE) Mum's the word all right. I'll drink to that!

Coffee, that is. Bye, Chuck!

**JAN** TAKES ANOTHER SWIG FROM THE BOTTLE.

(SINGS) Start spreading the news, I'm leaving today.

EXIT **JAN**. MAUD APPEARS FROM BEHIND THE COFFEE MACHINE. SHE MAKES HER WAY OVER TO WHERE **BRIAN, JULIE** AND **SAM** ARE SITTING.

**MAUD:**

Hey, people. I've got a juicy tit-bit hot off the press.

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