

IN THE OUT DOOR

Cast of Characters

TESS.....20's. Sharp, efficient, attractive.

JOSH.....20's. Desperate, upset, filled with righteous indignation.

PERRY.....40's. Classic backstabber and corporate survivor.

IN THE OUT DOOR

(Morning. An office. A desk with chair face a door opening to a corridor. The door is slightly open. Upstage center is a small cabinet.)

(TESS, 20's, enters from the corridor talking on a cell phone. She closes the door behind her and walks to the front of the desk.)

TESS

(into phone)

Right. I'll get them and bring them to the meeting.

(She clicks off, walks to the front of the desk, gathers some papers and writes a note on the top sheet. Suddenly JOSH, 20's, pops up from under the desk.)

JOSH

Don't be scared. I'm leaving right now.

(JOSH starts for the door.)

TESS

Who are you?!

JOSH

Uh -- I'm Josh Hemphill. I actually work here -- in the advertising department. And It would be great if you never saw me. I really appreciate it.

(Just as he reaches for the doorknob, there's a knock on the door and he flings himself against the wall next to the door which now opens as PERRY, 40's, sticks his head and sees TESS.)

PERRY

Oh, sorry. Didn't know anyone was in here. I'm looking for someone.

(PERRY backs out, closes the door.)

JOSH

Whoa. I might have to stay a minute or two. Just pretend I'm not here.

TESS

That's not possible since you are clearly here. Now what the hell are you doing in this office?

JOSH

I'm hiding.

TESS

Hiding??

JOSH

It's a little complicated. The guy who just poked his head in is looking to fire me, so I'd rather he didn't find me.

TESS

Uh huh. So you plan on running from office to office for several years to keep your job?

JOSH

Well no. That would be pretty impractical. You see I just found out about this and I took off before Perry came in this morning. He's got a thing about firing people face to face. I think it's his sadistic streak.

TESS

And Perry is the man who was just here?

JOSH

(picking up a chair)

Right. He's the creative director. Do you mind if I prop this chair against the doorknob for a few minutes?

TESS

I do.

JOSH

(puts chair down)

Of course. No problem.

TESS

Josh, I'm sorry you're being fired but I think what you're doing is -- how should I say this -- demented.

JOSH

I totally get that. But I just can't let Perry do this again. I can't.

TESS

Do what again?

JOSH

Does your door lock from the inside?

TESS

No. Do what again?

JOSH

Basically, I create an ad, and Perry takes all the credit. I have no problem being part of the team, but when the key concept and execution of the ad is my idea, and I never get even part of the credit....I just finished some tv spots for Sleepy Time Mattress, the mattress people loved them and I hear that Perry told Skip Burton, the head of the department, that it was all his concept. And this has happened more than once.

TESS

But if you do good work, why would Perry want to fire you?

JOSH

It's his m.o. People in the department have told me that when underlings start becoming too successful, he has to get rid of them so they don't kick up a fuss about all the credit he's taking. At first, you're too new to object. But now...I just can't give him the satisfaction.

(There's a quick knock on the door)

JOSH (CONT'D)

Oh god!

(JOSH ducks down behind the desk as PERRY enters.)

PERRY

Sorry but some people in the hallway saw a guy running into this office.

TESS
And?

PERRY
You didn't see anyone?

TESS
Do you see anyone in here?

PERRY
(indicating the closet door)
Do you mind?

TESS
Yes I mind. But if it helps you sleep at night go ahead.

(PERRY opens the door. It's a closet. Closes the door. He smiles and approaches TESS. During the following exchange, PERRY tries to nonchalantly circle Tess' desk looking for JOSH who moves away accordingly.)

PERRY
Let me explain. I'm looking for a member of my department -- advertising, fourth floor.

TESS
If he's lost, you should call the police.

PERRY
(forced chuckle)
No, no. He's not lost. I think he's actually running away from me.

TESS
Well this is fascinating. But I really have to get back to work.

PERRY
The thing is, I'm going to fire him. And I want to do it face to face. It's the honorable thing to do.

TESS
Is there any compelling reason why you're circling my desk?

PERRY

Oh no, no. I just like to keep moving.

TESS

Like a shark.

PERRY

Exactly! Listen, uh....I didn't get your name.

TESS

Not surprising since I didn't tell you.

PERRY

...So...?

TESS

Tess.

(By this time, JOSH has made his way around the desk to his original position.)

PERRY

(hands her his card)

Good. Tess, do me a favor and give me a call if you see a guy wandering around here, okay?

TESS

Oh you bet. Just out of curiosity, why are you firing him?

PERRY

So many reasons. But basically, he's very lazy. In fact, he hasn't come up with one interesting idea since he's been here. *(turns to go)*

(There's muffled yelp from under the desk.
PERRY turns back.)

PERRY (CONT'D)

What was that?

TESS

What?

PERRY

I heard a noise. Like a voice.

TESS

That was me “gasp ing.”

PERRY

Gasp ing?

TESS

Yes. I was gasping at the audacity of his laziness.

(A beat as PERRY considers this, then:)

PERRY

No, the sound came from the desk.

TESS

Are you suggesting I have a talking desk?

PERRY

(moving toward the desk)

I’m saying the sound I heard came from under --

TESS

Hold it! Unless you’re a vulture, I’d like you to stop circling my desk.

PERRY

If you’re harboring a fugitive, you’re going to be in serious trouble.

(JOSH pops up from the desk.)

JOSH

You bastard!

TESS

(mock shock)

Oh my god, there’s a man under my desk!

PERRY

Hemphill, you coward!

(JOSH advances toward PERRY who retreats.)

JOSH

I've had it with you taking all the credit for my work!

PERRY

You're delusional. *(to Tess)* Didn't I tell you he was delusional?

TESS

You did not.

JOSH

Everybody in the department knows what I contributed -- and what you didn't!

PERRY

Now you're physically threatening me. *(to Tess)* Note how he's physically threatening me.

TESS

He hasn't even touched you.

PERRY

He's advancing aggressively.

(JOSH jumps in front of the door blocking exit.)

JOSH

All I want from you is to admit that you took credit for my ideas.

PERRY

You've clearly had some sort of psychotic break. *(to Tess)* Call security.

TESS

(not touching the phone)

Their line's busy.

PERRY

Why are you taking his side?!

TESS

More believable.

JOSH

Thank you!

PERRY

(to Tess)

Who's your department head?!

TESS

Eleanor Roosevelt.

PERRY

Never heard of her.

TESS

I'm not surprised.

JOSH

(to Perry)

And you better stop threatening her!

TESS

Well put, Josh.

PERRY

What's going on here?

JOSH

You were about to apologize for stealing my ideas. And giving me a raise.

TESS

(grimacing)

Oooh.

JOSH

(to Tess)

Too far?

(TESS nods.)

JOSH

Okay, let's just go with the apology.

PERRY

Over my dead body!

JOSH

Hey, that's a thought.

PERRY

(advancing to Josh)

Why you little...!

JOSH

What are you doing? Oh, I forgot. You're a bully.

(PERRY reluctantly stops, fumes.)

PERRY

Give me that phone.

(PERRY crosses and picks up the phone on the desk.)

TESS

Of course you did threaten Josh with physical violence, which unfortunately I witnessed.

JOSH

That's right. He did!

PERRY

He threatened me first!

TESS

Except I didn't see that, remember?

PERRY

(to Tess)

I don't know what unholy intentions you have, but you need keep out of this!

JOSH

And I told you to leave her alone!

(JOSH dashes toward PERRY who drops the phone and runs around the desk evading him.)

PERRY

You've just lost a favorable reference!

TESS

Boys, boys, boys!! Stop it!

(They stop, eyeing each other warily.)

TESS (CONT'D)

Now it's time to try acting like semi-mature people.

JOSH

Fine.

TESS

Perry, let's cut to the chase. You wanted to fire Josh face to face. Do it.

JOSH

Hey, wait....

PERRY

Hemphill, you're fired!

TESS

Good.

JOSH

Good?!

TESS

Yes because now I'm free to hire you.

JOSH/PERRY

What?!

TESS

(extending her hand)

Welcome to Marketing.

(A bewildered JOSH shakes her hand.)

PERRY

This is beyond weird. As far as I'm concerned, you both deserve each other. (*edging cautiously out of the room; to JOSH*) Touch me and I'll sue.

(PERRY exits quickly. TESS begins gathering papers.)

TESS

I thought he'd never leave.

JOSH

Uh...so you're the head of Marketing?

TESS

Oh god no. That's Joanna Davis. I'm her assistant. This is her office.

JOSH

But how can you --

TESS

Hire you? Let's just say that she leans on me pretty heavily if you know what I mean. And I've always thought we needed someone with an Advertising background to round out our team. I'm sure she'll agree. And now, I have a meeting.

(TESS heads for the door.)

JOSH

Wait. Um...Thank you. I mean, you were -- Tess, let me take you to lunch.

TESS

Actually, I don't think it's a good idea for co-workers to socialize.

JOSH

Oh, no. Of course.

TESS

But after work, I don't think there's any harm in discussing this. Say 8 o'clock at Alfredo's?

JOSH

Uh -- yeah.

Great.

TESS

(TESS gives him a warm smile and exits. JOSH drops into a chair, head spinning.)

What the hell just happened?

JOSH

CURTAIN