

REMAIN VIGILANT



TWO LINKED ONE ACT PLAYS

BY

DAVID RALPH LEWIS

Remain Vigilant
Two Linked One-Act Plays
By David Ralph Lewis

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Dedication

To my mu, as always

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Part One: The Watchful Eyes

Cast of Characters

KIERAN FAIRWEATHER

25. Not his real name. Level 3 clearance

EDWIN HUNT

35. Not his real name. Level 6 clearance

THOM WALSH

26. Level 30 clearance

WARREN VOIGHT

33. Level 8 Clearance

Setting

A staff room. The surfaces are clean and empty. A single table with plastic chairs by it. There are at least three CCTV cameras, all bulky and obvious. A couple of posters on the back wall, saying 'SEE IT: REPORT IT.' and 'A QUIET WORKPLACE IS A SECURE WORKPLACE'

Time

The present day

The Watchful Eyes

(EDWIN sits at the table, sandwiches wrapped in foil in front of him. On curtain up he is scribbling in a small notebook.)

(He hears something, looks up frantically at the cameras, then puts the notebook safely away. He unwraps the sandwiches as KIERAN enters.)

KIERAN

Newbie! How's it going? Settling in?

EDWIN

Yes

KIERAN

Good to hear. Good to hear. Think you'll fit in well Eddie.

EDWIN

Edwin.

KIERAN

Seem fairly savvy. Got your head screwed on.

EDWIN

It's Edwin.

KIERAN

What?

EDWIN

My name is Edwin. Not Eddie

KIERAN

Same difference. What you eating?

EDWIN

Just sandwiches.

KIERAN

Sandwiches. You a joker?

EDWIN

Not really.

KIERAN

Classic. Look pretty good.

EDWIN

They're alright. Is there a problem?

KIERAN

Just banter Eddie.

(Pause)

Although...

EDWIN
What?

KIERAN
You got them scanned right.

EDWIN
What?

KIERAN
First thing. All the security. Need to declare them.

EDWIN
I don't understand.

KIERAN
Seriously? This is a problem. How do we know you're not a terrorist? I mean seriously mate. It's pretty much treason.

EDWIN
I didn't...

KIERAN
Management will be angry. I need to take them.

EDWIN
Sorry?

(KIERAN grabs the sandwiches from EDWIN.)

EDWIN
Give them back!

KIERAN
No can do Eddie. I could be saving the nation right now.

EDWIN
(aghast)
What is wrong with you?

(KIERAN sniffs the sandwiches)

KIERAN
Hmm. Tuna mayo. No hint of anthrax.

EDWIN
Please give them back.

KIERAN
Sounds like a something a terrorist would say.

EDWIN

What terrorist would possibly say that?

KIERAN

Only one way to tell for sure.

EDWIN

They're mine.

KIERAN

For Queen and country.

EDWIN

What?

KIERAN

Give my porn collection to charity if this doesn't work.

(KIERAN takes a bite.)

(Pause.)

(KIERAN looks at the sandwich, then at Edwin. He starts to cough, then grabs at his throat.)

EDWIN

Alright. Very funny.

(KIERAN falls to his knees, still coughing.)

(It goes on slightly too long.)

EDWIN

Are you...?

(KIERAN springs up, totally fine. He starts laughing)

EDWIN

Christ.

KIERAN

There you go.

(He chucks the sandwiches back to EDWIN.)

EDWIN

What was that about?

KIERAN

Your face! Classic!

EDWIN

I don't appreciate being-

KIERAN

Seriously.

EDWIN

You cant just walk in here and...

KIERAN

It's a just a joke mate.

EDWIN

Well it's not funny.

KIERAN

Remember though, as your superior I can do that whenever I want and you cant do jack. Seriously.

EDWIN

Right.

(Pause.)

(EDWIN picks up the sandwich with a bite taken out of it, looks at it, then throws it down in disgust.)

KIERAN

You're a bit old. No offense.

EDWIN

None taken. This is a young department.

KIERAN

That's the way management like it. I've known computers all my life. It's in my blood.

EDWIN

You can navigate the ins and outs of the system

KIERAN

Damn right.

EDWIN

You must know all the back doors

KIERAN

Know it like the back of my hand. Unlike older men.

EDWIN

I've got sufficient experience and skills for this position.

KIERAN

You're picking it up alright. But it takes longer. Dad still writes passwords down on sticky notes and puts them by his computer. Bless.

EDWIN

I am not your father.

KIERAN

But you're old enough.

EDWIN

I'm only thirty five.

(KIERAN whistles)

KIERAN

Fuck me! Practically dead.

EDWIN

Many thanks for the vote of confidence.

KIERAN

Seriously? Thirty five?

EDWIN

Yep.

KIERAN

Wow. Wonder why Management picked you.

EDWIN

Because of my unique combination of skills.

KIERAN

Sure mate. Sure.

(Pause. They examine each other for a moment.)

KIERAN

Seen any naked birds yet?

(KIERAN sits opposite EDWIN.)

EDWIN

What?

KIERAN

Naked birds. On their laptops.

EDWIN

I don't think that's... right.

KIERAN

Sure, get a conscience now. Already spying on them, might as well get something out of it.

EDWIN

It just doesn't seem proper.

KIERAN

Seriously. You need to take advantage. Take this Saturday. Went to this club, got chatting to this right tidy piece- her arse was...

EDWIN

I'm sure.

(KIERAN leans over and takes a sandwich.)

KIERAN

Lost her. But I had her phone number. Jackpot.

EDWIN
That's mine.

KIERAN
Got back to mine. Dialed in.

EDWIN
My sandwich!

KIERAN
Chill out Eddie.

EDWIN
I was just about to-

KIERAN
This bird right, cracking arse, tight black dress. Was so pissed I lost her. Should have seen her mate. Nice tits as well. I got back-

(THOM enters. EDWIN coughs.)

THOM
Alright fellas.

EDWIN
Hi?

KIERAN
Thom.

THOM
What are you chatting about?

EDWIN
Oh, Kieran here was just-

(KIERAN coughs.)

(Pause.)

THOM
Warm welcome as always.

KIERAN
Don't you have tea to be getting?

THOM
I'm on my lunch.

KIERAN
Again?

THOM

No, first time.

EDWIN

Good afternoon. I don't think we've met

THOM

New recruit?

KIERAN

That's right.

EDWIN

Name's Edwin.

THOM

Thom. With an H.

KIERAN

With an H. Dick.

THOM

Sorry?

KIERAN

Nothing.

THOM

Nice to meet you anyway.

(He shakes EDWIN's hand.)

KIERAN

Ew!

THOM

What?

KIERAN

You got the newbie stink.

THOM

Sorry about Kieran. Some of our staff haven't evolved much beyond the stone age.

EDWIN

It's fine.

KIERAN

How's it down in Data Entry?

THOM

Fine. Better than you plebs up here in Information Monitoring.

KIERAN

Going to get beyond level thirty this year?

THOM
Kieran's a real joker.

EDWIN
I noticed.

THOM
Shame none of his jokes are funny.

EDWIN
A bit unethical I find.

KIERAN
What's it to you?

(Pause.)

EDWIN
Nothing.

(THOM puts a kettle on.)

KIERAN
Bit embarrassing. Stuck at a low level at twenty six

THOM
This is why I always enjoy coming up here Kieran. Your brilliant company.

EDWIN
So what does that make me?

KIERAN
You just started mate. You'll be going through the levels in no time.

THOM
I wouldn't listen to a thing he says. It's all lies.

KIERAN
Shut up. Avoid Internal Ethics and you can really advance. Started where you were a few years ago. Mates thought I was a mug for not going to uni. Now level fifteen. Earning more than they ever will.

EDWIN
Oh. Right.

THOM
He won't let you forget it either.

KIERAN
Some of us take pride in our work.

THOM
What, watching ordinary people go about their business? Say what you will about data entry, but at least it's honest.

EDWIN

I'm still getting used to it myself. Seems... weird.

KIERAN

Takes some time mate. But adapt and survive, that's what I always say.

THOM

Funny that. It's the first time I've ever heard you say it.

KIERAN

You never listened in the first place.

(Pause. The kettle boils away.)

THOM

Still up for football tomorrow?

KIERAN

Wouldn't miss it. I'll kick your arse.

THOM

He says that a lot.

KIERAN

You should come along.

EDWIN

Oh, its not really...

THOM

Yeah, a few of us. Inter-departmental thing, been going a month or so..

EDWIN

I don't really play.

KIERAN

Nor does Thom.

(KIERAN laughs. No-one else does.)

THOM

Remind me, what was the score last time?

KIERAN

Piss off.

EDWIN

No. It's not my thing.

THOM

Shame.

KIERAN

This bird right. I have a little VPN set up and-

EDWIN

Can you do that?

KIERAN

Sure. It's easy.

EDWIN

But if Internal ethics catch you-

KIERAN

All anonymous. They can't prove anything.

THOM

Kieran's a ninja when it comes to getting his rocks off.

(The kettle has boiled. THOM pours a cup of tea. Whilst he is doing this, KIERAN grabs the foil from the sandwiches, scrunches it up and throws it at THOM.)

KIERAN

Prick!

THOM

Alright! Calm down mate.

KIERAN

Why are you here? You have your own kitchen. With the lower levels.

THOM

Wanted to see your lovely face.

KIERAN

Gay.

EDWIN

Are you allowed to use another department's staff room?

THOM

Sure. I don't think it's a problem.

EDWIN

I thought this place would be more secure.

THOM

Well there's some areas you can't go to. You need higher clearance.

EDWIN

But this is fine?

THOM

Sure.

EDWIN

Internal Ethics wouldn't have a problem with it?

THOM

What they don't know won't hurt them.

KIERAN

Exactly. Like my web of beautiful, unknowing cam girls.

THOM

Take everything this one says with a pinch of salt will you?

EDWIN

I will.

KIERAN

Nah, he can't be trusted.

EDWIN

No-one is to be trusted, isn't that the official motto?

(Slight pause.)

KIERAN

Yeah. Yeah it is.

THOM

Where'd you hear that?

EDWIN

Just around.

KIERAN

Right.

(Pause. KIERAN reaches over and takes the other sandwich.)

EDWIN

Excuse me

KIERAN

What?

EDWIN

That's my lunch.

THOM

His lunch now.

EDWIN

(Sighing)

I suppose you think your crude attempts to intimidate me are going to work?

KIERAN

Got balls newbie? Want to take me on?

(Unseen to KIERAN, WARREN has entered. He stands in the doorway, surveying the scene.)

(Everyone else freezes.)

KIERAN

Come on then? Prick.

WARREN
Mr Fairweather. A delight.

(KIERAN turns around.)

KIERAN
Warren. Didn't see you there mate.

WARREN
I'm not your mate. And it's Sir or Mr. Voight to you.

KIERAN
(Quietly)
Oh right. Sorry.

(WARREN enters and crosses to the sink. He wears elbow length gloves, which are covered in blood.)

(THOM gets out of his way.)

WARREN
Thank you Mr. Walsh.

(He starts to wash his gloves. THOM just nods., trying to be invisible. It doesn't work.)

WARREN
This is the Information Monitoring staff room, is it not?

THOM
That's right.

WARREN
Data Entry has their own room. Downstairs

THOM
Our kettle is broken. I wanted a cup of tea.

WARREN
Whilst unfortunate, that is a matter for Maintenance, is it not?

THOM
I guess.

WARREN
But you still enter a staff room that isn't yours.

THOM
So have you. You've got your own kitchen down in Interrogations.

WARREN
I have higher clearance than you.

THOM
Didn't think it was a-

WARREN

Ah! What a pleasure. I see we are graced with the presence of-

(EDWIN stands quickly and thrusts his hand out.)

EDWIN

Edwin Hunt. Nice to meet you. I'm a new starter here.

(Pause.)

WARREN

Of course. 'Edwin'. A pleasure to make your acquaintance.

EDWIN

Nice to meet you.

WARREN

You'll forgive me if I don't shake. I am a little...indisposed.

EDWIN

Not a problem.

(Pause.)

WARREN

I trust your colleagues are instructing you well.

EDWIN

I'm learning a lot from my superiors.

KIERAN

Showing him the ropes.

WARREN

Of course. I'd expect nothing less.

KIERAN

Yeah, he's settling in.

WARREN

Good to hear.

EDWIN

That's right. I'm getting to grips with the basics.

THOM

It's what it's all about.

WARREN

Level twenty aren't you?

THOM

That's right.

WARREN

Don't address your superiors in that fashion.

THOM
Like what?

WARREN
Damn your insolence.

THOM
Sorry?

KIERAN
Mate, leave it.

THOM
I didn't...

WARREN
You shouldn't even be up here.

(WARREN gets out a pad and scribbles something down.)

WARREN
Tut tut. Such disobedience. Go to the archive in Sub-basement Three and find this file.

THOM
What?

KIERAN
Go on mate.

THOM
I don't...

KIERAN
It'll be easier.

THOM
I'm on my lunch!

(WARREN hands THOM the piece of paper. THOM looks at it, sighs)

THOM
Fine, see you in a bit Kieran?

(KIERAN is silent.)

(THOM sighs and exits.)

EDWIN
Does that happen a lot?

KIERAN
Bit harsh.

WARREN

You are questioning my methods?

KIERAN

Nah. Just saying.

WARREN

Has he been instructing you in the ways of perversion yet?

EDWIN

He mentioned a few things.

KIERAN

Got bored in your basement did you?

WARREN

I do like to observe the cattle in their natural habitat.

KIERAN

Been prosecuted by the Geneva convention yet?

WARREN

For the protection of Queen and country Mr Fairweather. But of course you are ignorant of such matters.

KIERAN

Nah. Busy doing actual work.

WARREN

Oh, that is what you call it?

KIERAN

Vital work.

EDWIN

It certainly appears to be fulfilling.

WARREN

Right. This conversation bores me. Mr. Fairweather, Go retrieve your daily log.

KIERAN

What? Why?

WARREN

Yours is not to question why. Just do.

KIERAN

Aren't even in our department.

WARREN

But I do have significant clearance as a level eight. Make haste

KIERAN

Oh for fucks-

WARREN

Language.

KIERAN
Fine

(He stands up.)

KIERAN
Back soon newbie.

WARREN
Don't dawdle.

KIERAN
Don't listen to the prick

(KIERAN exits.)

(Pause.)

WARREN
Well now.

EDWIN
Well.

(Pause.)

(WARREN removes his gloves and places them in the sink.)

WARREN
Do we suspect he has traveled far enough?

EDWIN
Probably.

(Slight pause)

EDWIN
Jesus Warren, you could have given away my cover.

WARREN
My apologies Chris. I was foolish

EDWIN
I noticed.

WARREN
I didn't think.

EDWIN
Well clearly.

WARREN
Who is the target?

EDWIN
Take a guess.

WARREN
Mr Fairweather?

EDWIN
Got it.

WARREN
But he's only level fifteen He is an imbecile.

EDWIN
Internal Ethics thinks otherwise.

WARREN
Oh really? How intriguing.

EDWIN
We have been tracking his data usage for some time. Got quite a lot of evidence against him.

WARREN
So your role is simply clean up.

EDWIN
Exactly.

WARREN
Did they not consider you a bit old?

EDWIN
That's been the worst of it. I don't think he realises, but its hard to tell. He keeps a lot to his chest for someone who talks nonsense all the time.

WARREN
He is not to be trusted.

EDWIN
No one is. That's the motto .I know that much.

WARREN
So how has Mr Fairweather been utilising the data?

EDWIN
I can't tell you that.

WARREN
If it's an issue of national security I would rather-

EDWIN
Your clearance isn't high enough.

WARREN
I see.

EDWIN
Sorry. Just the way it is.

WARREN
No, I quite understand.

EDWIN
Just know he has been accessing material above his security clearance. We've noticed for a month or so now. Built up evidence against him. I've been observing his behaviour in the office.

(EDWIN gets out his small black notebook.)

EDWIN
I have enough detail. I'll strike soon.

WARREN
So you are going for his throat.

EDWIN
Indeed.

WARREN
Do you need an accomplice?

EDWIN
I'm sorry?

WARREN
I have despised Mr Fairweather since I first made his acquaintance. His manner is supremely irritating to me. He is not the sort of person who can be trusted with the burden of national security.

EDWIN
A pincer movement.

WARREN
Indeed. I don't have to know all the details. Just the essentials.

EDWIN
I'm not sure.

WARREN
Together we could force a confession out of him.

EDWIN
You're not just doing this as a favour of course.

WARREN
Chris. I'm shocked you would slander my good name in that manner. Can i not help a friend out?

EDWIN
So. You are level eight at the moment.

WARREN
Indeed.

EDWIN

It would be useful to have another pair of eyes and ears.

WARREN

It would be a personal pleasure.

EDWIN

So. Terms.

WARREN

Level six.

EDWIN

Never going to happen.

WARREN

Why not

EDWIN

I can get you a bit more access to a few specific files and if that goes well we can consider it down the line. I could maybe move you from interrogations.

WARREN

I wouldn't want to be anywhere else.

EDWIN

You sick bastard

WARREN

Well, you have to love what you do.

(Slight Pause. They look at each other and laugh.)

EDWIN

Alright. I'll see what I can do. No promises though

WARREN

Oh believe me, this will be more pleasure than anything else.

EDWIN

Charming.

WARREN

I don't think fools like Mr Fairweather should be allowed the privilege of higher clearance

EDWIN

He is good at his job though, that's the issue. His record shows an unqualified hit rate. He can scan through data and webcams like no-one's business.

WARREN

And yet.

EDWIN

And yet we know he's found a back door into the network. He accesses it at home. Already, we have a problem there. The network is only to be used here, where it is secure. We can't risk outside access. National

secrets are held here. He's using a VPN, but it's one we got to years ago. Not so private. We can figure out whose using it. And it led right back to Kieran. Another problem, why the anonymity? Or attempt at it. Final problem: he's logged on a lot. All through the night sometimes.

WARREN

What are the files he is-

(KIERAN enters again, clutching a file.)

KIERAN

Alright pricks.

EDWIN

I don't think you should really speak to superiors like that.

KIERAN

Shut up newbie.

(He hands the file to Warren.)

WARREN

My utmost thanks Mr Fairweather. I do appreciate your co-operation

(He opens the file, starts to read.)

EDWIN

So tell me more about this girl.

KIERAN

Right...

(He glances at WARREN.)

WARREN

Oh, don't mind me Mr. Fairweather.

(Slight pause.)

KIERAN

Where was I?

EDWIN

You got home after losing her.

KIERAN

Oh yeah, so logged into the VPN. Easy to set up really. Completely anonymous as well. Went through a back door into the system. Gets me full access. Anyway. I had her phone number. Plugged it into the system, located it, found where she had gone through GPS tracking

EDWIN

And that's quite easy.

KIERAN

Oh yeah. Child's play really. We'll start you off on that soon. From there, just a case of pinging the phone, see other devices IP addresses from the same location.

EDWIN
Cunning.

KIERAN
Cheers mate. Found the one for her laptop, activated the camera.

EDWIN
And they never know?

WARREN
Fascinating. Really.

(Pause.)

KIERAN
They never realise. Why would they? Its just a camera. No light turns on. We made sure of that. No one every thinks they're being watched by the same devices they use all day. Anyway, this bird cracking arse and it's brilliant mate. Happy days.

EDWIN
What's she doing?

KIERAN
Changing out of that tight black dress. Her body is stunning. She strips off, slowly, revealing little lacy panties. No bra so I can stare at her lovely tits. She's giving me my own private show and-

WARREN
This is an appropriate use of national resources?

KIERAN
What?

EDWIN
Seems you are abusing the trust the public put in you. The system is set up to catch crimes, not to make them.

KIERAN
We're already watching them anyway

EDWIN
For issues of national security. To protect the nation. Not to watch half naked girls for our own pleasure.

KIERAN
What's it to you newbie?

EDWIN
(Sarcastically)
Ha. Funny.

WARREN
I must thank you for fetching your daily log Mr Fairweather. Very informative.

(WARREN stands up, then slowly rips sheet after sheet from the log in two.)

KIERAN

What the hell?

WARREN

Informative, but completely irrelevant.

KIERAN

Warren, seriously-

WARREN

It's Mr. Voight.

KIERAN

Right sorry mate-

WARREN

Not your mate.

KIERAN

Right. Why did you want me-

WARREN

You imbecile.

EDWIN

Do you think Internal Ethics would be happy with your little set up?

KIERAN

Don't see what-

EDWIN

You misuse national resources for your own perverted kicks

KIERAN

They should have built the network to be more secure. What the hell?

EDWIN

I'll be sure to pass that message along.

KIERAN

Weirding me out now.

WARREN

You Neanderthal. You cretinous lichen.

KIERAN

Big words don't make you clever.

EDWIN

What puzzles me is why you would say these things when you know you are being monitored.

(He points to the cameras.)

KIERAN

I knew that.

EDWIN

We have to monitor the staff as well as the public. To ensure security at every level.

KIERAN

You forget.

WARREN

Forget?

KIERAN

The cameras are there. Newbie, seriously, this isn't funny.

EDWIN

Stop calling me Newbie

KIERAN

What's happening?

WARREN

You still don't get it.

KIERAN

Newbie? Edward mate?

EDWIN

First off you numbskull, it's Edwin. Secondly, it doesn't matter

KIERAN

I don't...

EDWIN

I'm with Internal Ethics. Security clearance level 6.

(Pause.)

KIERAN

Nah, Don't mess me around

EDWIN

It's true.

KIERAN

Fuck off.

EDWIN

Warren?

WARREN

I've made his acquaintance for years. Pops up now and then.

KIERAN

You're having me on.

EDWIN

Nope

WARREN

I've waited a long time for this.

KIERAN

A joke right?

(Pause. WARREN and EDWIN don't say anything.)

Shit.

EDWIN

Shit indeed 'Mate'. Shouldn't have stolen my sandwiches, should you?

KIERAN

Look, all that stuff I said, about the VPN, I was... just joking.

EDWIN

Sure.

KIERAN

Testing you. Testing your limits mate, that's all it was. Like the sandwiches. Test your limits.

EDWIN

Warren, check and see where Thom has got to? I would hate for us to be interrupted.

WARREN

Certainly.

(WARREN crosses to the phone. Dials and waits.)

EDWIN

I want to spend some time really getting to the bottom of this. Can't have anyone bursting in.

WARREN

Good afternoon? Is Thom there?

EDWIN

Really take our time over the fine details.

KIERAN

Mate, I haven't don't anything.

EDWIN

Ok then.

WARREN

He came down a little while ago.

EDWIN

If you lie now, it's only going to be more difficult later.

WARREN

Ok then.

(He hangs up.)

WARREN

Filing say they haven't seen him.

EDWIN

Odd. Lock the door will you.

WARREN

With pleasure.

(WARREN locks the door)

EDWIN

Now I know you're acquainted with Mr Warren Voight. I'm sure you have heard some of his techniques he uses in Interrogations.

WARREN

I have a bounty of unique and interesting methods.

EDWIN

Pretty serious what you've done. Accessing files above your security clearance. Using a VPN for your own personal pleasure.

KIERAN

Nah I never.

WARREN

Sounds like treason to me.

EDWIN

Against Queen and Country.

WARREN

Tut tut. Enemy of the people.

KIERAN

Mate, I never did it. It was just banter.

WARREN

Oh, come off it Mr. Fairweather.

KIERAN

Just made it all up. Seriously.

EDWIN

I find that hard to believe

KIERAN

Just to test you. As a newbie.

EDWIN

It will be quite a lot easier if you confess.

KIERAN

I haven't done anything mate.

WARREN

Traitor to the country. And a liar.

KIERAN

It's not.. how? Against the country?

EDWIN

We need to be constantly vigilant against any sort of threat the nation may face, stopping crimes and treason before they happen. The monitoring of the populace ensures safety for all. You have access to the most sensitive files. Sure, you are only level fifteen, but that give you access to far more data than the average person. You may think that grants you immunity, but in fact we need to track you closer. That is where I come in. Now Mr Fairweather, please. Tell me why you were accessing the network in your own time.

KIERAN

Jesus.

WARREN

Please continue.

KIERAN

Didn't do anything.

EDWIN

So you keep saying.

(Pause. KIERAN suddenly stands up and runs for the door.)

(With surprising speed, WARREN grabs him and drags him back to a chair.)

(WARREN pushes KIERAN down and holds him in place)

WARREN

It's locked you idiot. Don't even try it.

EDWIN

Disappointing.

KIERAN

I didn't do anything.

EDWIN

Then why try and run?

KIERAN

Just want to go back to work.

WARREN

You think think is some sort of game?

KIERAN

No!

WARREN

You maggot. You traitor.

KIERAN

No!

EDWIN

Lets keep this civil, shall we? I'm sure you don't want to go with Mr. Voight down to the basement.

WARREN

I've always hated you.

EDWIN

So lets keep it civilised.

WARREN

I have tools and implements. I can show you if you wish.

KIERAN

I didn't mean to...

EDWIN

Accessing sensitive data beyond your clearance.

KIERAN

I didn't!

EDWIN

Accessing the network outside of work hours.

KIERAN

Alright, I had a VPN. But only for work

WARREN

I would make it slow

KIERAN

Seriously?

EDWIN

You used your VPN for work?

KIERAN

That's right.

EDWIN

We have logs. You were on it all night sometimes.

KIERAN

Impossible. It was anonymous.

WARREN

Awww. How sweet.

EDWIN

Anonymity is a dream. You should know that by now. The state sees everything. We know it was you.

KIERAN

I blocked my IP.

EDWIN

And we got around it. Child's play, like you said.

KIERAN

So what, you have logs?

EDWIN

So it was just for work.

WARREN

Nonsense.

KIERAN

That's right.

EDWIN

Then why were you logged onto the network at three am on Saturday?

KIERAN

I had some work to catch up on.

EDWIN

You don't work the night shift.

KIERAN

No.

EDWIN

We have people who do that.

KIERAN

Sure.

EDWIN

So why did you need to log on?

KIERAN

I...

(Pause.)

WARREN

In more civilized times, we used to put people like you in the Tower of London.

KIERAN

I'm not a traitor.

WARREN

You would be tortured and killed. Your head would be placed upon a spike as a warning against other people who would commit treason. An elegant solution, I'm sure you'll agree.

KIERAN

Only to look at some naked birds.

EDWIN

So you admit you used it?

KIERAN

Used the network to perv on some birds undressing. Its not the end of the world. Only a few times. Seriously, I've seen others worse while at work.

EDWIN

But you weren't at work. You were at home. Masturbating.

KIERAN

I get it. I'm a pervert. Comes with the job.

EDWIN

Mr Voight?

WARREN

Sounds to me like gross misconduct. Mismanagement of security resources. Violation of network access without permission.

EDWIN

Phew. That's quite a lot there.

KIERAN

Look, I'm sorry alright. I didn't realise mate.

EDWIN

Oh dear Kieran. Oh dear.

KIERAN

What happens now?

EDWIN

You're in a whole world of trouble. Internal Ethics have a lot of evidence against you.

(He waves his small black notebook at KIERAN)

KIERAN

Warren mate, help me out?

WARREN

I am not your mate. I don't even like you.

KIERAN

I'm sorry. I used the VPN to watch pretty ladies get naked. I shouldn't have done it. Not with the network. I compromised the security of the nation and violated the trust placed in me. OK Mate?

(Pause.)

EDWIN

Well that's admirably honest.

WARREN

Shame. I was looking forward to using my toys.

(WARREN starts to stroke KIERAN's face.)

EDWIN

You need to learn your place in this organisation. It is bigger than you. You are nothing. a level fifteen drone. We keep the nation safe from harm. How are we meant to do that when people like you compromise our security?

KIERAN

I'm sorry, alright mate. I get it.

EDWIN

Tell me.

KIERAN

It's Queen and Country.

EDWIN

Exactly. Sacrifice for the common good.

KIERAN

Alright. Alright.

EDWIN

Of course, there is the matter of you accessing files beyond your clearance.

KIERAN

I don't know anything about that.

WARREN

Liar!

EDWIN

Oh dear, you've made Warren here mad.

KIERAN

What?

(WARREN grabs KIERAN's neck.)

WARREN

Traitor!

KIERAN

Mate!

EDWIN

Tell us Kieran.

KIERAN

I don't know anything!

WARREN

Enemy of the people!

EDWIN

Internal Ethics will have no problem dragging you away.

KIERAN
Seriously!

WARREN
I will make you squeal!

KIERAN
I dont-

EDWIN
Liar!

WARREN
Traitor!

EDWIN
SCUM!

WARREN
You piece of shit.

EDWIN
You weasel.

WARREN
I will cut you.

EDWIN
Why do you hate the nation?

WARREN
Why Kieran?

EDWIN
Why do you hate freedom?

KIERAN
I... I...

WARREN
Terrorist!

EDWIN
Treason!

WARREN
Scum!

EDWIN
You are nothing, you understand, nothing!

KIERAN
(Calmly, much posher)

I think that's enough

(Pause. WARREN is grabbing KIERAN's neck tight. EDWIN is leaning in close.)

(KIERAN lifts his hand and indicates for WARREN to let go.)

(KIERAN stands up and shakes WARREN's hand.)

KIERAN
Many thanks Warren.

WARREN
Was that alright?

KIERAN
Very good, thank you.

EDWIN
Sit the fuck down!

KIERAN
Oh dear Chris.

EDWIN
Sit down!

KIERAN
I'll speak to you in a moment Warren. But good job.

EDWIN
I don't understand.

KIERAN
Did you really think you were immune?

EDWIN
From what?

KIERAN
Oh dear.

EDWIN
Why are you still talking back?

KIERAN
That's enough now.

EDWIN
I don't-

KIERAN
We have to monitor everyone. Everyone.

EDWIN.
What?

KIERAN

Don't trust anyone. That's the old motto.

(Pause.)

EDWIN

Oh.

WARREN

I think he's got it.

EDWIN

You're internal ethics as well?

KEITH

Bingo, old chap.

EDWIN

I've never met you before.

KIERAN

Of course not. We can't risk such a high security secret getting out. I won't give you my name dear chap, because you aren't authorized to know it. But here is my clearance.

(He brings out a badge.)

EDWIN

Level three.

KIERAN

Marvelous.

EDWIN

I don't understand.

KIERAN

Sit down for a moment. I'll give you some time. Must be a frightful shock.

WARREN

Are we done Sir?

KIERAN

Very well done. To debrief, I thought you handled the situation well. Clearly, you brought him along with you and convinced him that interrogation was the way forward.

WARREN

Very good.

KIERAN

Yes, I'll ensure this looks good on your performance review.

WARREN

Thank you sir.

EDWIN

Warren?

WARREN
What is it?

EDWIN
I've known you for a couple of years now. I never knew about this. How come?

WARREN
A need to know basis. I've been involved with the higher levels of Internal Ethics for a few months.

KIERAN
Above your security clearance of course.

EDWIN
I checked your file.

KIERAN
Amazing how easy it is to block data from prying eyes..

EDWIN
But you've never been at departmental meetings.

WARREN
We are classified. The less people know, the better.

EDWIN
But... the logs-

KIERAN
You said it yourself, this whole operation is bigger than you are.

EDWIN
Right.

KIERAN
We need to check up on those in Internal Ethics as much as the rest of the staff. How else can we ensure absolute security? How else can we ensure the protection of the nation?

EDWIN
How far does it go? Do you have people checking up on you?

KIERAN
Checks and balances Edwin. Always watching.

(Pause)

EDWIN
So this was a sting.

KIERAN
In a way.

WARREN
Do you need me at all sir?

KIERAN

No thank you Warren, you've been very helpful.

WARREN

Chris. A pleasure as always.

EDWIN

Piss the fuck off Warren.

WARREN

Charming I'm sure.

(WARREN exits.)

EDWIN

You set me up.

KIERAN

In a way.

EDWIN

I pulled up your files. All your work history in this department.

KIERAN

Very easy to alter when you have my sort of clearance. You should have checked when it was changed. Easily overlooked, but the devil is in the details. I've actually only been this department for a couple of months.

EDWIN

Right. Look. I know some of my methods were unorthodox, but I got results. Not major violations by any means.

KIERAN

Well that's not technically true. You acted on lack of evidence. You were too fast to move to interrogation.

EDWIN

(Waving his notebook.)

I had evidence.

KIERAN

You had some rough logs of network usage and a story from a loudmouth. Anecdotal. That's all.

EDWIN

But you baited me.

KIERAN

And you fell for it. You should have resisted, gathered more evidence against me.

EDWIN

There wasn't time.

KIERAN

Warren played his part well. Another failure, bringing a lower level clearance with you. And conducting the interrogation in a public space. Not good. Sloppy methodology.

EDWIN

I wanted to get a confession.

KIERAN

I've been looking at your results from the last year. They've dropped off dramatically.

EDWIN

Look, I know I've been slack. Investigations have gone no where. I just can't get the data. But that will change. And I will find corruption and problems in this organization I promise you. I will find those employees who are not pulling their weight. Or who are using dodgy methodology. Those who are compromising the safety of the nation.

(Pause.)

KIERAN

That's a good sentiment Chris, it really is. Honestly old chap, it's good to keep in mind.

EDWIN

Thank you.

KIERAN

But I can't keep you in Internal Ethics.

EDWIN

But... Seriously? I've put years of my life into this organisation.

KIERAN

It's my job to keep it secure. And you are a major weakness at the moment.

EDWIN

But...please.

KIERAN

I'm moving you to Maintenance.

EDWIN

Oh come on.

KIERAN

Based on the data I've gathered and what I've observed today, I don't think you're right for Internal Affairs. Maintenance is much... safer.

EDWIN

A caretaker? After all I've done for this organisation. You cannot be serious.

KIERAN

I've made the decision.

EDWIN

Shit.

KIERAN

Your security clearance will need to be downgraded of course.

EDWIN

What?

KIERAN

Level twenty five. Effective immediately.

EDWIN

Twenty five? You can't do this.

KIERAN

You should have just slowed down. We need accuracy, not paranoia and stress.

EDWIN

Shit. You can't do this. You can't.

KIERAN

You're still involved in the heart of secrecy. It's bigger than you are. I just think you can best without so much responsibility.

EDWIN

I...

KIERAN

Keep your head up, old chap. We aren't all cut out for it.

EDWIN

I don't understand.

KIERAN

You'll have time to process it, I'm sure.

EDWIN

But...

KIERAN

My sympathies.

(KIERAN reaches over and squeezes EDWIN's shoulder.)

(Pause. EDWIN doesn't look at KIERAN, but stares at his feet, dumbstruck.)

(KIERAN gets up to exit.)

KIERAN

Oh and this is effective immediately. Report to Maintenance on the third floor. Your files are now locked, so don't try and access your computer.

(KIERAN exits.)

(EDWIN is left staring at the ground, mesmerized.)

(Pause.)

(EDWIN gets out his black book and tears out page after page.)

(Fade out, then CURTAIN)

Part Two: Paper Trail

Cast of Characters

YVONNE

42

PAM

56

THOM WALSH

26- Same character as 'Part One: The Watchful Eyes'.

Setting

Sub basement three within the same government department as 'Part One: The Watchful Eyes.' Huge stacks of papers and files cover the whole stage. Rows of shelves line the back of the stage. There is a door to a kitchen and on the other side a door to outside. At the front of the stage two desks are facing each other. One probably has a computer on it, somewhere. Both are completely covered in files.

Time

The present day. Same time as 'Part One: The Watchful Eyes'

Paper Trail

YVONNE is sat at the desk with the computer. She isn't using it, but is instead looking through post. A phone starts ringing, somewhere under all the paper. YVONNE picks up file after file, frantically trying to find the phone. She finds the phone. It stops ringing.

YVONNE
Bastards!

(Pause.)

YVONNE
I mean, honestly, can you believe it?

(Pause.)

YVONNE
I mean, really, what do they want from us, blood? Stupid stupid... Bastards!

(Pause.)

YVONNE
(Calling)
Pam?

PAM
(off)
Coming!

YVONNE
What's taking so long?

(PAM enters carrying two cups of tea. She moves slowly, with complete concentration.)

YVONNE
Finally!

PAM
Sorry Vonnie, don't be mad.

YVONNE
Took you a while.

PAM
It's so complicated.

YVONNE
I know darling. It's tough.

PAM
I just want to get it right.

(PAM approaches the desk. Carefully, she places one of the cups down.)

(YVONNE waves a letter.)

YVONNE
They want us to find a file.

PAM
No!

YVONNE
I know!

(The phone rings again. YVONNE snatches it up, knocking over one of the cups of tea.)

PAM
Oh no!

YVONNE
Right. Fine.

(She slams the phone down.)

YVONNE
Bastards!

PAM
My tea!

YVONNE
Oh.

(Pause.)

YVONNE
Oh Pam, I'm so sorry.

PAM
Oh.

YVONNE
I'm so so sorry darling.

PAM
I spent so long.

YVONNE
I know, I know. Shh. It's ok. It's ok.

(YVONNE stands and strokes PAM's hair.)

PAM
I really tried

YVONNE
I know you did.

PAM
I did not mean to.

YVONNE
It's not your fault.

PAM
I'm sorry Vonnie. I want you to have a cup of tea.

YVONNE
Pam, you made one for yourself as well, yes?

PAM
Yes.

YVONNE
I can have that one. Then you don't have to worry.

PAM
I would like that.

YVONNE
Thanks Pam.

PAM
Do you mean it?

YVONNE
I do. You've done really well.

PAM
Oh! Thank you!

YVONNE
Don't worry darling.

(PAM gives YVONNE the other cup of tea. She holds it out like an religious offering.)

YVONNE
Thank you for the gift

PAM
What about Mister Cooper?

YVONNE
I don't think he's thirsty.

PAM
He never is.

YVONNE
No. He's quite happy though.

PAM
Must be nice to be Mister Cooper.

YVONNE
So. Pam.

PAM
Nothing to worry about.

YVONNE
Pam?

PAM
Vonnie?

YVONNE
Management want us-

PAM
Bastards!

YVONNE
I know. But they want us to find a specific file and deliver it to them.

PAM
Deliver it to them?

YVONNE
I know. Up on the seventh floor.

PAM
I hate upstairs.

YVONNE
I know Pam, but we still need to find it. I'll deliver it if needs be.

PAM
Do not make me take it Vonnie, do not make me.

YVONNE
I won't. I'll do it.

PAM
You would?

YVONNE
Of course. But I need you to find it for me. Can you do that? For me?

PAM
Of course! Of course!

YVONNE
I'll write it down and make it nice and easy for you.

PAM
I will try my best.

(YVONNE grabs a piece of paper, double checks it, then looks around the desk.)

YVONNE
Pen... Pen.

(PAM picks one off the desk and holds it out.)

(YVONNE doesn't notice)

YVONNE
I had one just a minute ago. Where's it gone?

PAM
Vonnie.

YVONNE
It was just here. Bastards

PAM
Vonnie?

YVONNE
Not now.

PAM
Is this it?

YVONNE
Yes. Why didn't you say?

PAM
I....

YVONNE
Come on Pam.

PAM
Sorry.

YVONNE
Right, here is the file I want you to find.

(She scribbles a number on the paper)

PAM
I don't want to mess up the system.

YVONNE
Sometimes it has to be done.

PAM
You will not shout?

YVONNE
Of course not.

PAM
You do sometimes.

YVONNE
Sometimes I get angry or frustated. It won't happen this time.

PAM
Promise?

YVONNE
I promise. Now go find it for me.

PAM
OK Vonnie!

(PAM runs off to the rows of shelves at the back of the stage. She walks between the stacks and vanishes.)

PAM
(off)
I'm being useful!

YVONNE
Yes Pam!

(The phone rings.)

YVONNE
(Sighing)
Bastards.

(YVONNE lets it ring a couple of times, staring at the phone in hatred. She sighs and picks it up.)

YVONNE
Yes?

(Pause)

YVONNE
No. That's fine.

(Pause.)

YVONNE
I've got my best person on it.

(Pause. THOM enters, unseen by YVONNE. He looks around sheepishly.)

YVONNE
Yes. I understand.

(YVONNE slams down the phone.)

YVONNE
Stupid bloody bastards.

THOM
Um, excuse me?

(Pause. YVONNE freezes, turned away from THOM.)

THOM
I was looking for Sub-basement 3. I guess this is it?

(Pause. YVONNE doesn't move at all.)

THOM
I can see you, you know.

YVONNE
Er....

THOM
I can see you.

(YVONNE turns to meet him, trying to be professional.)

YVONNE
(Overly polite)
Good afternoon sir, welcome to the Archive. We can assist you with all your needs.

THOM
Hello

YVONNE
Hello.

THOM
Hi?

YVONNE
Hello?

THOM
I was sent down to find a file.

YVONNE
Oh. Right. By management.

THOM
No, by someone upstairs.

YVONNE
Upstairs eh?

THOM
Yes?

YVONNE
You don't look like one of them

THOM
Thanks. I think.

YVONNE
The last one they sent was old. You're young. Got good bones.

THOM
OK. Could you help me find the file?

YVONNE
You have a reference?

THOM
Yes, somewhere here...

YVONNE
What's your clearance?

THOM
Level thirty.

(He gets out a badge. YVONNE looks at it for a long time, then scribbles down something on another file.)

(Pause.)

THOM
I...

YVONNE
One moment!

THOM
Only...

YVONNE
Please. I am trying to do my job. Sir.

(Pause.)

(YVONNE hands the badge back to THOM)

THOM
(Reading)
The reference is number three four six slash two zero one four slash a slash six seven two six one slash abb slash five wbw.

YVONNE
You can't just walk in here and expect to pick up a file.

THOM
But I thought you had all the files.

YVONNE
We do.

THOM
Christ, has Warren sent me on a wild goose chase again?

YVONNE
You need to follow the right system.

THOM
I don't really see the issue.

YVONNE
We have a delicate, precise system of filing and archiving.

THOM
(looking at all the piles of paper)
I can see that.

YVONNE
We can't just pull files out willy nilly. We need time to comb through our index before extracting the appropriate file. We typically ask for all requests to be submitted in writing, three working days in advance.

THOM
Look, I was just sent down here to get it. I can wait if needs be.

YVONNE
What was your name?

THOM
It was on my clearance

YVONNE
Remind me.

THOM
Thom. With an H.

YVONNE
Well, Thom with an h, you're just going to have to wait. Without a written request it may take longer. I have my esteemed colleague looking for a file at the moment.

THOM
And you can't look I suppose.

YVONNE
Someone needs to be present to answer the telephone.

(She stares at the phone for a moment as if expecting it to ring. It doesn't.)

THOM
Right. OK. Whatever.

YVONNE
She won't be long.

THOM
Was meant to be my lunch break.

YVONNE
Boo hoo. My heart bleeds.

THOM
Well. Anyway, I want to get back to it.

YVONNE
You upstairs people think you are so much better than us. Mr Cooper was the same.

THOM
I don't think I'm better.

YVONNE
Then why do you want to go? Hmm?

THOM
I left my sandwiches up there. Cup of tea as well, probably gone cold by now.

YVONNE
Always the same. Ridiculous.

THOM
No, that's not what I'm saying.

YVONNE
Thinking we're worse off, just because we don't have any windows

THOM
I didn't say that. It's just I'm missing my lunch.

YVONNE
Well we may not be as fancy as you upstairs bastards. I know Management look down on us, but we're proud.

THOM
I can see that.

YVONNE
You can?

THOM
Yes, you seem to be... um, very on top of it.

YVONNE
So what are you saying?

THOM
Nothing I-

(PAM runs out of the stacks, clutching a file.)

PAM
Vonnie! Vonnie! I found it! I found it!

YVONNE

Well done darling.

PAM
I found it! I- Oh.

YVONNE
Now Pam, darling, don't be scared.

PAM
Stranger!

YVONNE
It's ok.

PAM
Is he from... upstairs?

YVONNE
That's right.

PAM
Like Mr Cooper?

YVONNE
That's right. Like Mr Cooper.

THOM
Excuse me, are you going to help me?

PAM
What shall we do?

THOM
What's going on?

YVONNE
Pam?

PAM
(Woodenly)
Good afternoon sir and welcome to the Archive department. I would be happy to assist you with any query you may have today and to help you find the information you require. Now, what is your problem and how can I help?

THOM
I just want to find a file.

PAM
Umm...

YVONNE
Go on Pam. It's ok.

PAM
What is the reference. Sir?

THOM
Oh my god!

YVONNE
It's OK darling. Don't be so harsh on her please.

THOM
I told you all this before.

YVONNE
She's fragile!

THOM
Right, let me get the reference out.

YVONNE
I can see you're annoyed. But please refrain from using aggressive language

THOM
What aggressive language? I'm going round in circles here.

YVONNE
Pam, the reference is number three four six slash two zero one four slash a slash six seven two six one slash a
bb slash five bw.

(Pause.)

THOM
Um... yes. That's exactly right. Wow.

YVONNE
Well I don't know what happen upstairs, but we take pride in our work down here.

THOM
Well done.

YVONNE
I'll get Pam to find it for you.

(PAM stands, chanting the reference under her breath.)

YVONNE
She's just processing it. Won't be a moment.

(Pause.)

THOM
Alright...

YVONNE
So what department are you from?

THOM
Data Entry.

(Pause. PAM stops chanting. YVONNE stares at THOM.)

YVONNE
Say that again.

THOM
Data Entry. Why?

(Pause. YVONNE looks slowly to PAM, who is breathing heavily.)

THOM
Is there a problem?

PAM
How dare you? How dare you?

YVONNE
Pam. It's ok.

PAM
No! you should not have come down here. You think you are so much better than we are. You are awful. I hate you. I hate you.

YVONNE
Pam. Sit down.

(PAM sighs and sits down.)

YVONNE
Now turn around.

PAM
Oh but Vonnie!

YVONNE
Just do it.

(PAM turns her chair away. She takes deep breaths to calm herself.)

YVONNE
I'm sorry about her. It's just Data Entry give most of the files.

THOM
Well yes, but not all of them.

YVONNE
What do you mean?

THOM
It's mostly on computers now. There's not much actual paperwork. Apart from log files.

YVONNE
I don't understand.

THOM

It's a bit old fashioned all this, isn't it? We mostly just store files digitally now.

YVONNE

It's a system. It works.

THOM

Right. Why don't you just digitize the files?

YVONNE

I'm sorry Thom with an H, I don't understand.

THOM

Put them on a computer?

(YVONNE stares blankly at THOM. Pause.)

THOM

Computers?

YVONNE

Nope?

THOM

There's one there. On your desk.

YVONNE

The square lamp?

THOM

No, I- Um.

(Pause.)

YVONNE

Excuse me a moment.

THOM

Oh for- Can i get this file or not?

YVONNE

One moment sir.

THOM

Oh my God.

(YVONNE bends down to talk to PAM. THOM stands around awkwardly.)

PAM

I am sorry Vonnie. I didn't mean to. I am sorry

(YVONNE strokes Pam's hair.)

YVONNE

Shh my darling. Don't worry. It's ok. It's ok.

PAM

I didn't mean to shout. But he's from upstairs. And Data Entry. The bastards.

YVONNE

I know.

PAM

So he is bad

YVONNE

I know darling.

PAM

I was scared.

YVONNE

I don't like him either.

PAM

We can not let him mess up the system

YVONNE

No.

PAM

So what are we going to do?

YVONNE

I have a plan.

PAM

You aren't going to let him go?

YVONNE

Of course not darling. Be calm. it's all in control.

THOM

Look, I'm sure that file doesn't matter too much. Warren can get it himself.

YVONNE

Ok Pam? Like before.

PAM

I apologise deeply for the inconvenience.

THOM

Thank you ever so much for the complete lack of help

(THOM goes to exit.)

YVONNE

I'm so sorry Thom with an H. Please, take a seat and we will find the file for you.

THOM

Really?

YVONNE

Of course. We're here to help you.

THOM

I can give you the reference again.

YVONNE

No, that's alright. We can find it from the information you have given us.

THOM

Finally. Ok. We're getting somewhere.

YVONNE

Take a seat. It may take us a little while to find it. Can I get you a tea or coffee whilst you wait?

THOM

A tea perhaps?

YVONNE

Here we go sir.

(She hands him the tea PAM made.)

PAM

I made that for you!

YVONNE

Shhh. It's ok.

(THOM sits down on the office chair.)

PAM

But-

YVONNE

Now Pam! Hold him down!

THOM

What?

(PAM jumps on THOM, forcing him down. He struggles, holding the cup of tea and trying not to spill any whilst also trying to push PAM off. She is surprisingly strong.)

THOM

What is-!

PAM

I've got him! I've got him!

YVONNE

Hold his arms down!

PAM

Got them!

(YVONNE grabs thick packing tape or rope and wraps it around THOM's arm and the chair arm.)

THOM
What the hell?

PAM
Yay! Vonnie! Yay

(YVONNE moves quickly, securing THOM to the chair.)

YVONNE
Get the other arm!

THOM
Jesus! Get off me!

PAM
Got it!

(YVONNE tapes his other arm to the chair.)

THOM
What the hell?

YVONNE
Don't struggle. It'll be easier.

THOM
What the fuck are you doing?

PAM
Bad word!

YVONNE
Be still.

PAM
Shhh.

(YVONNE finishes taping him arm to the chair.)

YVONNE
There.

(THOM struggles quite a bit.)

THOM
What the hell are you doing? Let me go?

YVONNE
Ooh, yeah. Sorry for the inconvenience but we can't do that.

THOM
You're crazy.

YVONNE

Pam? Could you do his chest?

PAM

Yay!

(PAM takes the tape and starts to wrap it around THOM's chest and the back of the chair. Whilst she is doing this she also goes over the arms to ensure they are secure.)

(The phone starts to ring.)

THOM

Jesus.

YVONNE

Bastard. Can't let you go back upstairs and spread lies about this department.

THOM

This is a joke isn't it?

YVONNE

Got to keep it secure. It's your fault you know.

THOM

Kieran! I know you're watching the security camera at the moment, pissing yourself laughing.

YVONNE

You think you're so much better than us.

THOM

Alright, it's not funny any more. Ha ha. Well done.

YVONNE

Well you're not! We control the files. We have access to all the information.

THOM

Nice one mate.

(The phone stops ringing.)

YVONNE

You are nothing. Security Level Thirty.

PAM

Data Entry!

YVONNE

You make our lives miserable. Send down file after file and expect us to put them away.

THOM

It's not my fault.

YVONNE

You're a terrible person.

THOM

It's those who are higher up.

PAM

(Confused)

Higher than upstairs?

THOM

No I mean, management. They force us to do the paperwork. Don't want to do it. It's just a job. But they make us fill out endless forms and files and reports.

YVONNE

But those bastards aren't down here. You are.

THOM

I know, but-

PAM

It has been such a long time since someone came to visit. Not since Mr. Cooper.

THOM

I'm sorry, but that's not my fault.

YVONNE

Just once they could say 'Good job' or send someone down to do an inspection or a spot check or something. Bastards. Don't even get mentioned in the minutes any more.

THOM

Kieran, it's well funny mate. Let me go

YVONNE

No. You don't know what it's like.

THOM

I can speak to people upstairs. I can get you invited to meetings

PAM

He is lying.

THOM

I can speak to some people and try and get the files moved to digital.

PAM

What is dye-gye-tol?

THOM

All of this can be stored on a computer.

(Pause.)

YVONNE

But they won't fit in the lamp.

THOM

Doesn't matter.

YVONNE

Look at you with your fancy upstairs words like 'digital'.

THOM

That's not it.

YVONNE

How do you know management? You're only a level thirty stupid.

THOM

I have friends.

YVONNE

I don't believe you.

THOM

I do! I can at least get you into some meetings.

PAM

He is pretty.

YVONNE

A new toy.

PAM

Oh good. Mr Cooper is getting smelly.

(Pause. PAM strokes THOM's hair.)

PAM

We are going to have lots of fun together. I hate you. But I think you're pretty.

(THOM starts to laugh. Looks at a security camera.)

THOM

Alright, Kieran. You got me. Good one mate, good one. I bet this is revenge for me winning at football. It was a fair goal! So well done Kieran mate. You got me this time, you massive, massive prick.

YVONNE

Who are you talking to?

THOM

I'm sure Kieran is watching the camera right now laughing his head off.

PAM

Who is Kieran?

THOM

You don't have to pretend anymore. I know Kieran set you up. He's a complete bell end and this is exactly something he would do.

YVONNE

Is that another bastard from upstairs?

THOM

Oh nice one. Well done Kieran. You got me good.

YVONNE

That camera doesn't work.

THOM

Sure it does. Everywhere is monitored in this place.

YVONNE

Pam?

(PAM stands on a pile of papers. Reaches up and lifts the camera off the wall.)

PAM

It stores tea bags!

YVONNE

See? We are ignored.

THOM

Oh.

PAM

Who is Kieran?

THOM

It doesn't matter.

(Pause.)

PAM

What shall we start with?

YVONNE

He's yours to play with.

PAM

I am going to have lots of fun with you. Pretty.

YVONNE

Remember where he's from. He's not to be trusted.

PAM

I know.

THOM

Please let me go.

YVONNE

You'll only go upstairs and laugh about those people in sub basement three.

THOM

I can help you.

YVONNE

Not at level thirty.

THOM
Please...

PAM
Shall I get the tools?

YVONNE
If you want my darling.

PAM
Oh goodie!

THOM
Just wanted my lunch break.

(PAM looks through a drawer on her desk.)

YVONNE
What tools do you have today?

PAM
Stapler!

(As she says each item, she brings them out of the drawer and holds them above her head like trophies.)

YVONNE
Good!

PAM
Letter opener!

YVONNE
Excellent!

THOM
What?

PAM
Staple extractor!

YVONNE
Well done.

THOM
Tools?

PAM
Compass!

YVONNE
Well done darling. Well done.

THOM

I don't know what you're planning-

YVONNE

Shh Thom with an H. It's OK. It'll be over soon.

THOM

You need to24.

PAM

Oh, I'm going to have so much fun!

THOM

I'm-

PAM

Which one shall I use first?

THOM

I'm Internal Ethics!

(Pause.)

YVONNE

Hang on Pam.

PAM

Oh.

YVONNE

One moment.

PAM

What is he saying Vonnie?

YVONNE

Shh Pam. It's ok darling.

THOM

You need to untie me.

YVONNE

Internal Ethics? Is that so Thom with an H?

PAM

Oh no!

THOM

That's right.

PAM

Oh no. Oh no no no.

THOM

And I am not impressed with the treatment I have had today. To say the least

YVONNE

So why does your badge say level thirty on it?

THOM

A cover! In reality I am clearance level five and am authorized to investigate every department.

PAM

We are sorry!

YVONNE

Shh Pam, It's ok.

PAM

We did not mean it.

YVONNE

It's alright.

PAM

I did not realise!

THOM

I came down here to check how the department was being run. A routine investigation just to check upon the processes with the most sensitive files. And I am not impressed.

PAM

Do not be mad!

THOM

I have found this department to be slow and completely inefficient. And that was before you insulted me and tied me to this chair.

PAM

We are sorry.

THOM

I mean. Look at this place.

YVONNE

It's fine.

THOM

Random piles is not 'fine'. You have files on almost every citizen, all just lying around. It is unacceptable.

PAM

We can change. We can make it better.

YVONNE

No. There's a system.

THOM

I find that hard to believe.

YVONNE

There is.

PAM
We have a system.

YVONNE
I don't expect you to understand.

THOM
Well it seems ridiculous.

YVONNE
Bully for you. Just because you lack the brain capacity to understand it.

THOM
Please untie me so I can continue the investigation.

PAM
OK. Do not be mad.

THOM
Please let me go.

PAM
Of course.

(PAM goes to untie him from the chair.)

YVONNE
Pamela.

PAM
Vonnie?

THOM
Come on. I can't be here all day.

PAM
Sorry Sir.

YVONNE
Don't.

PAM
But he's Internal-

YVONNE
Don't my darling. Just don't.

(Pause. PAM freezes, unsure of what to do.)

THOM
I don't appreciate still being tied to this chair.

PAM
Vonnie?

YVONNE
It's OK darling.

PAM
I should let him go?

YVONNE
No.

PAM
Why not?

YVONNE
Please Pam. Trust me.

(Pause.)

So you're Internal Ethics.

THOM
I told you. Yes.

YVONNE
Come to investigate our department.

THOM
That's right.

YVONNE
And you have security level six. But no way of showing it or proving it to us.

THOM
We have to operate on some levels of secrecy.

YVONNE
OK. I can see that.

PAM
Vonnie! He is doing his job.

YVONNE
You don't have another name tag.

THOM
Let me go. I will go up to my desk and find it.

PAM
Vonnie? Should I let him go?

YVONNE
No. What clearance level did you say you were?

THOM
Six. I just said.

YVONNE
You said five earlier.

(Pause.)

THOM
You must have misheard.

YVONNE
No. You said five earlier.

THOM
That was not what I said. As the manager of this department I think you need-

YVONNE
Oh, I'm not the manager.

THOM
You must be-

YVONNE
Pam?

PAM
Manager? Yes. I'm the manager. I manage.

THOM
You run this department.

PAM
I'm the 'man-a-ger'.

YVONNE
Pam ensures the day to day smooth running of the Archive department.

THOM
Right.

(Pause.)

YVONNE
Is there an issue?

THOM
No. So Pam?

PAM
Yes?

THOM
Can I call you Pam?

PAM
That is my name.

THOM
Right.

YVONNE
It's OK darling. Talk to the nice man.

THOM
What do you think can be done to improve the day to day operation of the department?

YVONNE
It's OK.

PAM
More tea?

THOM
I meant operationally.

PAM
I like tea.

THOM
Like, in terms of the systems in place.

PAM
Do you want a tea?

YVONNE
Not now Pamela.

PAM
Oh. But he looks thirsty.

YVONNE
I know.

PAM
Do you want another tea Vonnie?

YVONNE
No thank you.

PAM
I might get one.

YVONNE
But you're speaking to Thom with an H, who may or may not be in Internal Ethics.

PAM
OK.

THOM
What is a typical day for you Pam?

PAM

I'm sorry?

YVONNE

Answer the nice man's question.

PAM

I don't understand?

THOM

How do you manage?

PAM

Oh!

YVONNE

There we go darling.

PAM

I get in.

THOM

Good start to the day.

YVONNE

Let her speak.

PAM

I sit down. I make a cup of tea for me. I make a cup of tea for Vonnie.

(Pause.)

PAM

Ummm...

THOM

How do you manage the department?

PAM

The department?

THOM

Yes.

YVONNE

Show him your management Pam.

PAM

Really?

YVONNE

Go on darling.

PAM

OK. I manage really well.

(PAM slowly picks up a seemingly random pile of papers. Looking at THOM, she walks across the room, clutching the papers. THOM and YVONNE watch her as she walks.)

(She gets to the other side of the stage. She places the papers on another pile.)

(PAM looks back to the others and smiles, pleased with herself.)

PAM
Management!

(Pause.)

THOM
Well. Thank you Pamela. That was... enlightening.

YVONNE
You'll be mentioning that in your report.

THOM
Of course.

YVONNE
The report to Internal Ethics.

THOM
That's right.

YVONNE
About this department.

THOM
Of course.

YVONNE
That you are definitely going to write.

THOM
Yes.

PAM
Did I do good Vonnie?

YVONNE
Of course.

THOM
I'm also going to mention the assault and the enforced imprisonment as well.

YVONNE
I'm so scared.

THOM
Oh, they'll hear all about this.

YVONNE

Who will? Bastards?

THOM

Management. When I make my report.

PAM

Shall I untie him?

YVONNE

No.

PAM

But he's writing a report.

YVONNE

And giving it to management. Which is odd because only level threes and above get to see management.

(Pause.)

THOM

They will see it.

PAM

We should let him go.

YVONNE

No.

PAM

But he is so pretty. Not like Mr Cooper.

YVONNE

We can't.

THOM

You are in a lot of trouble.

YVONNE

Pam darling, I want you to go find a file for me.

PAM

Now?

THOM

I wouldn't be surprised if you were fired.

PAM

Fired?

YVONNE

Don't listen to him darling, he can't fire you.

THOM

Or thrown in prison.

PAM

I do not want to go to prison.

YVONNE

You won't.

PAM

But he said-!

YVONNE

He says a lot of things darling.

PAM

I like it here.

YVONNE

And you'll stay here.

THOM

I'll close this department down.

PAM

Vonnie!

YVONNE

Just don't listen to the bastard. Go to the personnel files. Find a file marked Thom Walsh.

THOM

That's not necessary.

YVONNE

But you haven't shown us sufficient clearance. How can we trust you?

THOM

I am Internal Ethics.

YVONNE

Oh its fine. I believe you. Pamela believes you.

PAM

I do!

THOM

Then what's the issue?

YVONNE

You'll forgive me a little bit of diligence.

THOM

There's no reason to keep me tied up.

YVONNE

Go find the file darling.

PAM

Ok!

(PAM runs off to the stacks and disappears.)

THOM

So what, she comes back with the file, you see I'm in Internal Ethics, then what?

YVONNE

No, I'll see you're lying.

THOM

Right. That isn't going to happen.

YVONNE

You don't seem very confident.

THOM

I know I'm Internal Ethics. I don't need to prove it.

YVONNE

Well I'd like to make certain.

(YVONNE sits on the desk and picks up a stapler.)

YVONNE

I know you aren't anyway.

THOM

I am though.

YVONNE

If you say so. It's been so long since we had someone from upstairs come visit us.

THOM

I don't know how to convince you of the truth. You are in a lot of trouble.

YVONNE

Ok then.

THOM

You're an antiquated department anyway. This is just a waste of paper.

YVONNE

All this paper is important. There is a system.

THOM

What I am going to propose is we fire you both, scan all the documents. Then destroy them all.

YVONNE

No! You wouldn't do that.

THOM

After what you've done to me?

YVONNE

It's fine. It's fine. You aren't internal ethics.

THOM
Sure.

YVONNE
You aren't

THOM
OK then.

(Pause.)

YVONNE
I've put my whole life in this department. My whole life. You don't know what that feels like. You're still young. But it's been twenty five years of maintaining all the files. Now, it may not be perfect. I know I've let it go a little in the last few years.

THOM
Let me work with you.

YVONNE
I know we are not popular upstairs. I haven't been to a meeting for years. They just leave us down here in our own department, on our own. Watching the files stack up. Never checking up on us. Never even acknowledging us. I'm older now. Tired. I've seen enough bullshitters in my time to recognise people like you.

(PAM emerges from the stacks, blinking.)

PAM
Vonnice?

YVONNE
So why would Internal Ethics suddenly take an interest in us? After all this time?

THOM
I-

PAM
I could not find it Vonnice.

YVONNE
It seems strange.

PAM
Don't be mad.

YVONNE
According to management, we don't exist.

PAM
Sorry.

YVONNE
And now you don't either.

PAM
I'm sorry.

THOM
They'll come find me. Come looking for me.

YVONNE
Someone might shake their head in a few weeks and say 'Has anyone seem Thom?' And everyone else will shrug. Then a couple of weeks later your job will be filled by someone else. And no-one will notice.

THOM
They will.

PAM
I checked the personnel files and it was not there.

YVONNE
Did you double check?

PAM
Three times

YVONNE
Are you sure?

PAM
Yes.

YVONNE
Guess I'll have to go look myself.

PAM
You're not mad Vonnie?

YVONNE
No darling. Look after the boy will you?

PAM
OK!

YVONNE
And Pam?

PAM
Yes Vonnie?

YVONNE
Don't untie him.

THOM
Please!

PAM
Ok.

YVONNE
It's important Pam darling.

PAM
I won't!

YVONNE
Promise?

PAM
Promise Vonnie!

(The phone starts to ring)

YVONNE
Ok Pam. I know I can trust you.

(Pause. The phone is still ringing.)

YVONNE
Bastards!

(YVONNE picks the phone up.)

YVONNE
Hello?

(Pause.)

YVONNE
We haven't seen him I'm afraid.

THOM
Warren!

(YVONNE draws a finger over her throat.)

YVONNE
No not at all. Good day-

THOM
Help! I-

(But YVONNE has already hung up.)

YVONNE
(To THOM)
See? No-one cares. I'll be back, you piece of shit.

(YVONNE exits to the stacks.)

(Pause. THOM and PAM look at each other.)

THOM
How long have you worked here Pam?

PAM
I dunno

THOM
Ten years? Twenty?

PAM
I feel like I have always worked here.

THOM
Do you like it?

PAM
It is scary upstairs. There is light and machines

THOM
No-one is going to make you move.

PAM
I do not want to.

THOM
It's ok. It's ok.

PAM
You can not make me.

THOM
I won't. You're safe here.

PAM
Mr Cooper was from upstairs and he wanted me not to work here any more.

THOM
Right.

PAM
He was scary but now he is friendly.

THOM
Mr Cooper?

PAM
That's right. You can play together.

THOM
OK then Pam. I'm sure I'll get on with Mr Cooper.

PAM
You will. He is very nice.

THOM
My arms are hurting. Can you untie them?

PAM

Vonnie said not to

THOM

But she's not here. She's looking for the file.

PAM

I know.

THOM

The file is going to say I'm Internal Ethics Pam.

PAM

It is not!

THOM

Then you are going to be in big trouble.

PAM

I do not want to be in trouble.

THOM

Unlucky. You're going to be in a lot of trouble.

PAM

No!

THOM

Unless you untie me.

(Pause. PAM wrings her hands.)

PAM

I can not.

THOM

No?

PAM

I'm sorry. Don't be mad. I can not.

THOM

Why not?

PAM

Because Vonnie said.

THOM

I see

PAM

So.

THOM

You are the manager though.

PAM
Yes.

THOM
Do you know what being a manager means?

PAM
It means I manage.

THOM
Not quite.

PAM
It means I make tea.

THOM
No. It means you are in charge.

PAM
I am in charge. I manage.

THOM
But you do what Vonnie tells you to do.

PAM
She knows better than me.

THOM
You can tell her what to do.

PAM
I could not do that!

THOM
You give the orders.

PAM
No!

THOM
But Vonnie would have to do it.

PAM
Vonnie is better than I am. I listen to Vonnie.

THOM
You don't have to! Jesus Christ, don't you understand? Don't you see? You're in charge here!

(Pause.)

PAM
You shouted.

THOM
I'm sorry.

PAM
You shouted at me.

THOM
It's ok. It's ok. I was angry. And scared. Because I'm tied to this chair and I don't know what's going on.

PAM
Why would you shout?

THOM
I'm sorry Pam. I'm sorry. Please. Just look inside yourself. I know Vonnie says a lot of good things. I'm meant to be on my lunch break. I don't want to be tied to a chair. It hurts Pam.

PAM
Vonnice told me.

THOM
I know. I know.

(Pause. PAM walks over. For a moment it looks like she is about to untie THOM. Her hands idle on the packing tape.)

PAM
Mr Cooper asked the same things.

THOM
Please...

PAM
He was like you. He wanted me to let him go. He promised me a window put in here. I could look out and see the trees.

THOM
I can help.

PAM
No! Vonnie told me he was lying. That all of Mr Cooper's words were lies. He was a nasty person.

(Pause)

PAM
He came from upstairs. He said they wanted me to 're-tyre'. They would give me lots of money. I do not want money. I just want to be here.

THOM
Pam. I'm not Mr. Cooper. I'm different. I can help.

PAM
We could not let him go after that. Vonnie told me so. Such a shame.

THOM
You don't have to listen to her.

PAM
You're so pretty.

THOM

She doesn't always think of you.

PAM

Poor Mr. Cooper.

THOM

Look. She's selfish. She wants to keep you here by yourself. Instead of letting you out and allowing you to see the trees she is keeping you in this basement to help her out while she does nothing.

PAM

No.

THOM

She makes you do things for her while she does nothing. She's made you a servant.

PAM

Thats not true.

THOM

You make the tea. You get the files. You-

PAM

SHHHH!

(YVONNE enters from the stacks, brandishing a file.)

YVONNE

So then.

PAM

You found it!

YVONNE

Mr Thom Lukas Walsh.

THOM

Yes.

YVONNE

You reckon you're Internal Ethics.

THOM

You don't have to do this.

YVONNE

You walk into my department. My house almost. I mean, this is sacred territory.

THOM

Please. Pam.

YVONNE

You ask for a file. When you're from Data Entry. When you generate all the files here. You'll mess the system up.

PAM

Why would you want to do that?

YVONNE

Then you try to claim you're from Internal Ethics.

PAM

Is he Vonnie?

THOM

Please. Help me.

(Pause.)

YVONNE

No. No he isn't.

PAM

Oh!

YVONNE

Says in the personnel file right here. Thom Walsh. Data Entry. Level Thirty.

PAM

He lied!

THOM

Can you blame me?

PAM

You lied.

THOM

Help me Pam.

PAM

Are you going to shut this department down?

THOM

No.

YVONNE

He has no power. He knows nothing.

PAM

Oh!

YVONNE

He won't be missed.

THOM

Please.

(Long pause.)

YVONNE
Well now.

(Pause.)

YVONNE
What are we going to do with you?

PAM
Why are we keeping him then?

YVONNE
Shh now.

PAM
If he has no power?

THOM
It's not funny any more.

YVONNE
We don't take too kindly to liars.

THOM
Kieran! You bastard!

YVONNE
We need to teach you a lesson.

THOM
Please! Please. You don't have to. Please...

YVONNE
Pam darling?

PAM
Yes Vonnie?

YVONNE
Introduce our guest to Mr Cooper.

THOM
No!

PAM
Ok.

THOM
No! I don't want to see him! No!.

PAM
He seems upset?

YVONNE
He's just lying again. Go on Pam.

PAM
But he's sad.

YVONNE
He's a liar. He's lying.

THOM
No. Don't. No.

PAM
But..

YVONNE
Pam!

PAM
Yes Vonnice.

THOM
No. It's OK. I don't want to see him. I don't. I don't.

PAM
He's very friendly.

THOM
No. Please no.

(PAM moves some papers and find a cabinet.)

THOM
God no.

(PAM opens it. Takes something out, her back to the audience and THOM.)

PAM
Say hello.

THOM
No! God No! NO!

(PAM turns around. It is a skull. She places it reverently on the desk.)

PAM
Say hello to Mr Cooper.

(Long Pause.)

(THOM can no longer speak. He stares at the skull, making choking sounds as if he is trying to form words.)

YVONNE
Lets start then.

PAM
Vonnice?

YVONNE
Yes Pam darling?

PAM
Why are we keeping him here?

YVONNE
Because he's from upstairs.

PAM
He can not hurt us.

YVONNE
He's Data Entry. The enemy.

PAM
Oh.

YVONNE
He made all these files. Gave us all this work.

PAM
I like the work though.

YVONNE
Come on Pam darling. Let start.

(Pause.)

PAM
Ok.

YVONNE
Good girl.

(PAM walks over to the desk.)

(Pause.)

(PAM picks up a pair of scissors.)

THOM
No...Please...

(PAM walks over to THOM, brandishing the scissors.)

(She holds them over him.)

THOM
PLEASE!

(Pause.)

(She cuts through the packing tape on one of his arms, quickly.)

(THOM looks at his arm in disbelief.)

(PAM quickly cuts the tape from the other arm.)

(Pause. THOM looks at PAM)

YVONNE

What the hell are you doing?

(Pause. No-one moves for a moment.)

(THOM suddenly rips the rest of the tape off and runs for the door.)

YVONNE

Don't just watch him!

(But PAM watches him exit.)

(Long pause.)

YVONNE

What the hell have you done?

(PAM turns slowly to look at YVONNE with new found anger and confidence. She is panting. She still holds the scissors.)

(YVONNE and PAM look at each other.)

PAM

Management.

(The two watch each other, waiting for the other to make the first move.)

(CURTAIN.)

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About the Author

[David Ralph Lewis](#) is a poet and short story writer based in Bristol, UK, whose work has appeared in *Neon* and *DogEar* magazines as well as the *Lies, Dreaming* podcast. He blogs regularly about politics and art and often scrawls over newspapers to create blackout poetry. When not writing, he enjoys dancing badly at gigs, attempting to grow vegetables and taking photos. He understands a very, very small amount of what is going on in the world.

On his website, David maintains a [blog](#) about writing, art and politics as well as any other random topic.

You can follow him on [Twitter](#) [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#) and & [Goodreads](#) if you want.

Other books

[Our Voices in the Chaos](#)- A unique combination of blackout poetry and normal poetry, *Our Voices in the Chaos* is my debut poetry chapbook, published in September 2019 by Selcouth Station

[Spare Parts](#)- A unique collaborative pamphlet with Amelia M. Eilki, fusing flash fiction and blackout poetry.

[Amber Stars: One Night of Stories](#)- Set in a small town in England over a Saturday night, this is a darkly funny collection of linked short stories that shows the characters who emerge after the sun goes down.