

The Admirable Miss Smith

Scene 1

Two offices. Stage left a neat office. Stage right – a tip. Books on the floor, a guitar, dumbbells etc. There is a door between the two against the back wall. The dividing wall is imaginary. Stage left is a neat middle aged lady working at her desk. A man and woman enter.

Mo I know what you two want and my answer is that it's got nothing to do with me.

Sally Of course it has – it's got everything to do with you. After all he is your boss.

Mo Exactly, he's my boss – so talk to him.

Hugh That's not fair Mo, it's you who has caused the situation.

Mo Oh yes – I'm going on holiday next week – so I'm the sinner.

Sally For four weeks – that's the problem.

Mo Let me remind you Sally that your mother has conveniently gone to Australia for six months to visit her grandchildren – and you Hugh – that according to my contract I am entitled to five weeks annual holiday.

Hugh Yes – but four weeks in one go.

Mo Has he been any more amenable when I've had two weeks.

Sally Well no but..

Mo There's no buts. You know if I wanted just four days off he'd throw just as big a fit.

Sally It's not just you going that's the problem.

Mo I know your problem. You've got to try and find some poor, bloody temp to suffer him for a month.

Sally No, not any more. For the past eleven years our Agency has provided twenty-nine temps to be abused and bullied by your egotistical and sadistic boss and my mother told me to refuse to do it any more.

Hugh Oh come on Sally – surely your mother's got someone on the books who hasn't heard about him.

Sally Yes Hugh, we have but we also have a reputation to uphold. Of the twenty-nine temps we have supplied to Rodney Fuhrer Groomes we've

had four court cases for damages, three inquiries to the Working Practices Committee, a nervous breakdown and one poor, wee thing who totally disappeared and we've never seen her again. For a time I thought he'd killed her.

Hugh Now you're just being melodramatic Sally, you know she just went home to Canada.

Sally Most only lasted for one day. Olga lasted a whole week – we never knew how. I tell you Hugh, Mum says we've had enough. No more girls to be scarred for life. I have a duty of care for them. I know, as Personnel Director, you have put an awful lot of work the Agency's way, but no more girls for him and that is final. And you'll do no better with the other Agencies – and I know you've tried. All the other girls that I send here to other departments are fine – it's just him! *They both look accusingly at Mo.*

Mo Look I am going to see my sister and her two lovely daughters in Capetown for four weeks. I told him about it months ago. Since then he has threatened me with everything, including the sack. If he should sack me by the way Hugh, I will be suing for wrongful dismissal.

Hugh Oh thank you Mo – that's a real help that is. Well I don't know what to do now, I'm at my wits' end. *They all stand looking dejected.*

Sally I wish my mother would come back. She said she was only going for two weeks. I don't fancy seeing Mr. Groomes again. He asked me whether I was still in nappies and had I brought my dummy with me! I said, I may be young but I have a degree in business management and he said he was surprised I'd finished my A-Levels. He's very rude.

Hugh Yes, yes, very upsetting but it doesn't help us with our problem.

Sally Well....it's only a thought...

Hugh Anything.

Mo If you want me to take him with me – forget it!

Sally I had a friend my mother wouldn't have on her books.

Mo Poor girl, what was it? Is she retarded?

Sally Not at all. She was always the cleverest in our group.

Hugh But you said you wouldn't send one of your girls under any circumstances.

Sally Like I said, my mother wouldn't have her – so really she isn't one of our girls. You'd have to employ her as a freelance.

Mo What's wrong with her?

Sally Well nothing really, it's difficult to explain, I always liked her. We were great friends – we had a brilliant time together

Hugh Come on Sally there must be something wrong with her.

Sally Well she's very forthright and lacks decorum you might say.

Mo You mean she's bloody rude.

Sally Too true – she doesn't give a toss for anyone. She never lasted long in any of her jobs – there were always complaints – that's why my mother wouldn't take her on our books.

Mo She won't last long with Tantrum Boy.

Hugh Now wait a minute here. We've always tried to find temps who would fit it, to bow their heads and be subservient, but they didn't last more than a day, I don't see how it can be any worse. Perhaps this girl is a good ploy.

Mo He'd throw her out.

Sally I wouldn't like to try it, she doesn't take too kindly to that sort of thing.

Mo He'll get Security to throw her out.

Hugh What? Old Owen? He's too old to throw anyone out. Sally, get her round here tomorrow, we'll give him a taste of his own medicine.

Mo It could mean the boot for us all.

Hugh No – who else would work for him. Send her round tomorrow. What's her name?

Sally Miss Admirable Smith and good luck to you Mr. Rod Misery Groomes.

Blackout

Scene 2

Tim Mr. Groom's office?

Mo (not looking up) Yes.

Tim Oh good.

Mo That's a matter of opinion and who might you be?

Tim Tim. Tim Mallock-Brown. Today is my first day. I was told to report here by Dr. McClintoch in Human Resources.

Mo Another lamb to the slaughter eh?

Tim I beg your pardon?

Mo Nothing. He's not in his office at the moment you'll have to wait.

Tim Right – no prob. *He wanders around the office looking at things.* They say he's a bit eccentric.

Mo *not looking up.* Do they?

Tim Yes. They say he can be a bit abusive for no reason at all they say. Perhaps they were just joking.

Mo They weren't.

Tim What?

Mo They weren't joking.

Tim I see. So he might be rude and abusive to me.

Mo *still not looking up.* He will.

Tim I don't see why. I've done nothing.

Mo It's just his way

Tim It's a pretty odd way if you ask me.

Mo He won't.

Tim Won't what?

Mo Ask you. *She gives up trying to work and looks up.* Look, what do you know about the amazing Rodney J. Grooms?

Tim Ah well – I googled him. He's a multi millionaire.

Mo Billionaire.

Tim Really? The site must be out of date. He says he's single, but not gay, a bit reclusive, his staff are paid the highest in the financial world but he expects a lot for his money. He is ruthless in his business dealings but very generous to his favourite charities. How's that?

Mo Not bad. Did it say anything about him being absolutely, bloody bonkers?

Tim No – should it?

Mo Definitely.

Tim When you say bonkers in what way is he bonkers?

Mo In every way a person can be bonkers I suppose. A different way every day.

Tim I don't suppose you know in what way he's bonkers today?

Mo I wish.

Tim What time does he come i?

Mo Oh he's in – he rarely goes out. You see, that's not just his office in there, it's a whole complex. Living accommodation, squash court, pool, hi-tech media suite and God knows what else. And then the pig heap next door where he communicates through me to the outside world, if you can call shouting, swearing and insulting communication. It's ridiculous really he has hi-tech equipment in there so that he can speak to and see anyone anywhere in the world but he won't have a bloody intercom fitted to talk to me.

Tim How do you know when he wants you?

Mo Hang around and you'll find out. I should make yourself comfortable if I were you, we could be here all day.

Tim Right.

Mo There are some Annual Reports for a few of the companies he owns on the table. I should look through them and familiarise yourself with them.

Tim Right. Will that help?

Mo I shouldn't think so but it will help pass the time.

Tim Have you worked for him long?

Mo Too long. Eleven years.

Tim Eleven years? I suppose you must know him pretty well by now.

Mo Not really.

Tim Does he have a lot of people who've worked for him for years? You know – a corporate family?

Mo No – most people who work for him are lucky to last eleven months not years.

Tim It says on line that it is the constant turnover of young, brilliant staff that has helped make him successful. Keeps the company fresh and exciting.

Mo Does it really? Shows how little they know. The company is a success because he is a genius and we are here to run around after him and keep him amused. If we weren't here, he'd still be making his billions but he has to spend his money on something so he keeps us here to feed his ego.

Tim So I suppose you are the only long serving member.

Mo No, Hugh McClintoch the Human Resources Director who must have interviewed you has been here about seven years. He only suffers the abuse because he is a qualified psychiatrist and is fascinated by Grooms' personality plus of course the high remuneration he receives. That's what keeps most people here for a few months at least.

Tim Well I shall stick it out. I'd find it impossible to get another job at this salary. I think I can stand a few insults for this kind of money.

Mo Really? Well we'll see won't we. *She carries on working and Tim reads the reports. Lights up on stage right. A young man enters in T shirt and shorts. On the front of the T shirt is "wet from sweat". He is in his socks. He looks at the mess on his desk, looks at the door of Mo's office and just sweeps everything from the desk on to the floor.*

Rod *Shouting at the top of his voice.* MO! YOU LAZY SLUT. GET IN HERE STRAIGHT AWAY!

Mo *Looking up and cupping her hand to her ear.* Oh is that the dulcet tones of my Lord and Master I hear? That Tim was the hi-tech intercom of the leader of the world's financial and commercial institutions. Effective don't you think?

Tim Did I hear him call you a slut?

Mo Yes – he must be in a good mood today.

Tim He sounds very angry, hadn't you better get in there quick?

Mo No – I don't want to spoil him, he might start taking me for granted.

Rod MO! GET IN HERE YOU STINKING OLD BROAD OR YOU'RE OUT OF A JOB!

Mo There – I told you he'd soften.

Tim He said he's going to sack you.

Mo Fat chance! Who else would work for him?

Rod MO! YOU'D BETTER GET IN HERE OR ELSE I'LL.....

Mo Oh don't burst a blood vessel I'm coming. See you soon – or not as the case may be. *She enters Rod's office.* Good morning Mr. Grooms and how are you today?

Rod I'm bloody angry – that's how I am today.

Mo Well, what a surprise.

Rod Don't be flippant. Look at this bloody mess. Can you explain it?

Mo A slight breeze from an open window perhaps?

Rod Possibly, but isn't it part of your pathetically light duties to keep my office tidy?

Mo I think not. The last time I tried to tidy your desk up you threatened to have me disembowelled if my memory is correct.

Rod Did I? Ah yes. Well I've changed my mind. From now on it's your job to keep my desk tidy.

Mo Right.

Rod But don't you bloody dare move anything. Well get on with it. *She starts to pick things up from the floor.* Oh for God's sake get out of the way. You're too bloody old and feeble to do anything. I don't know why I keep you on.

Mo I imagine it's just your natural innate kindness.

Rod *Having put everything back on his desk.* Yes it's always been my weakness. There that's better, now see you keep it like that.

Mo Yes Mr Grooms.

Rod I've been telling you for bloody years to call me Rod.

Mo Yes Mr Grooms.

Rod Oh you're a mental old tart!

Mo Yes Mr Grooms.

Rod Now what's all this shit about you going on holiday?

Mo On Monday for four weeks.

Rod Not possible. It's my busy time. Request denied.

Mo On Monday for four weeks.

Rod If you go on holiday you needn't come back.

Mo On Monday for four weeks.

Rod You've never had more than two weeks at a time in all the years you've worked for me and I use the term "work" in its broadest sense.

Mo On Monday for.....

Rod ...for four weeks – I know. Why can't you wait? What's the rush? I know what it is. You've at last got some poor, demented half wit to get between your legs and give you a.....

Mo I'm going to see my sister and her family in South Africa if you must know.

Rod But why are you going for four weeks?

Mo Well it's a long way for just two weeks. I haven't seen them for years. My nieces and nephews are growing up.

Rod South Africa – a long way? This is the 21st century. South Africa is just a few hours away.

Mo Oh yes – says you – who never goes out of the front door.

Rod Right – I shall sack you!

Mo And I shall sue you for wrongful dismissal and retire to South Africa with my sister for good.

Rod Wrongful dismissal? On what grounds?

Mo On the grounds that I am entitled, by law, to have four weeks paid holiday per year.

Rod Bastard politicians! I should have been in business in Dickensian times – they knew how to treat uppity staff in those days.

Mo I don't know why you're getting so worked up, I'll get you a temp.

Rod A temp? A bloody temp? I remember that one last year – the fatster – looked like a pig in knickers. I couldn't stand her, I gave her the bum's rush the first morning.

Mo And she sued us for abuse and bullying.

Rod Abuse? What bloody abuse?

Mo Well calling her "lard arse" for example.

Rod Is that it? Just that? She had no sense of humour that was her problem.

Mo What about the other twenty-nine?

Rod Twenty-nine what?

Mo The other twenty-nine temps you've had when I've been on holiday.

Rod I've never had twenty-nine temps.

Mo *Referring to her notes* I've got them all down here. Janet O'Mara do you remember her?

Rod Ah yes – the ginger nut with fly shit all over her face.

Mo Possibly. She lasted two days. Gabby Hamilton?

Rod No – don't remember her, No wait a minute, black girl, lovely bum, I liked her.

Mo Yes but unfortunately she didn't like you. It was when you suggested that if the bathroom needed scrubbing she could use her hair. She lasted four days. Sylvia Spriggs ring a bell?

Rod Now I know I've never heard of her.

Mo I'm not surprised. A very thin, pale girl.

Rod Oh yes – I remember – I don't know what happened to her. She came in, I said "Good morning", she started blubbing and I never saw her again.

Mo No you didn't say "Good morning". In fact you said, and I quote, "Bugger me they've sent me a skeleton where did they dig you up from the cemetery? What's your name Bones?"

Rod Alright, alright don't go on.