

ONE OF THE NICE ONES

Written by
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CHARACTERS

TRACY, a white woman in a wheelchair. She is a shark who smells blood in the water.

ROGER, her boss, a cis straight white male. The epitome of privilege.

NEAL, a co-worker, a man of color. Genuinely nice, honest, good.

COLLEEN/WANDA, a client, a woman of color. Done being nice. Fuck nice.

SETTING

An office of a mid-sized company that sells diet products. It could be any office anywhere. The kind of place where nothing matters more than what -- and how much -- you sell, sell, sell.

TIME

Now.

NOTES

A "beat" doesn't necessarily indicate a "pause," but rather a shift in thought.

Words in [brackets] should be thought but not spoken.

SCENE ONE

An office.

*A woman in a wheelchair, TRACY, sits across from
ROGER, a man in a suit. He looks over some notes on his
desk for a beat. When Tracy finally breaks the silence:*

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*
*

TRACY

I'm nervous.

ROGER

Don't be nervous.

TRACY

But should I be?

ROGER

No, I told you --

TRACY

It's just -- I'm sorry, Roger, but you have so much power and I feel like I should've spent the last three months cultivating more of a relationship with you because I need this job. That sounded really desperate, pretend I didn't say that.

ROGER

Tracy --

TRACY

Oh God, I can tell pretending makes you uncomfortable. You're one of those guys who's not good at pretending. You spend all your time in Literal World. I'm sorry if that was rude of me to say. It was only an observation. I do this all the time. I'm sorry. This is a thing that I do. I talk too much and then I apologize too much, and I'm sorry about that too, but it's all because I let my anxiety take control, and--*no, stop that, Tracy.* You know what? I'm going to *choose* not to be nervous. I'm reading a book on self-actualization and I'm halfway through the empowerment chapter? They talk about how our emotions are a choice. It sounds obvious when you say it out loud, but I never thought about emotions that way. I've always thought of emotions as something that happened to us, but we *choose* to be what we are. Being an emotional wreck is a choice. Being happy is a choice. Not being nervous, that can be a choice too. So that's what I'm choosing now. To not be nervous. Just tell me if you're firing me because the answer to that question will determine how well I'm able to succeed at my emotional choice for the day. So if you're firing me --

ROGER

I'm not firing you.

TRACY

-- you can skip the formalities and let me know right now --

ROGER

I'm not firing you.

TRACY

-- because I'm a big girl, I can take it.

ROGER

Tracy? Tracy, did you hear what I said?

TRACY

No.

ROGER

I'm not firing you.

TRACY

Really?

ROGER

This is just a performance review.

TRACY

But honestly, when is a performance review *just* a performance review?

ROGER

Right now.

TRACY

Because at the retreat, Neal said he heard from Phil that you guys have to make cutbacks, and he said he was telling *me* because new people are always the first to go, and I know my quota's only at 70 percent this month -- I know that and I'm going to fix it, because like I said before: I need this job.

ROGER

Did you enjoy the retreat?

TRACY

I did.

ROGER

That's what you should focus on. Everyone here at Tender Form Weight Loss Systems agrees that you brought a lot to the table. A lot of good ideas. You fit in, you were like one of the guys. In fact, I forgot you were new.

TRACY

That's nice of you. But still. If there are cutbacks --

ROGER

We're not making cutbacks --

TRACY

-- I have the least seniority. The thing I keep telling myself, though, is how bad it would look for you to fire the disabled girl.

Beat.

*

ROGER

That's not how I see you.

TRACY

You don't look at me and see my chair?

ROGER

No.

TRACY

... Oh.

ROGER

(referring to his notes)

So I was looking at Phil's report, and --

TRACY

I just find it a little disingenuous, that's all. I mean, *I* look at me and see my chair. I don't know why you wouldn't. It's just a weird thing for you to say. It's offensive, actually.

ROGER

How so?

TRACY

It's part of who I am. The chair, it's kind of hard to miss, and -- for you to cavalierly say you don't see it, to say it doesn't register -- don't you hear how dismissive that sounds?

It's like telling a black person that you "don't see color." Which, one, is an outright lie, and two, it's a denial of who that person is when they actually are, by definition, colored.

ROGER

I don't think they like being called that.

TRACY

Are you black?

ROGER

No.

TRACY

Then you're missing my point.

ROGER

I have no idea what your point is --

TRACY

You saying that you don't see my chair, it's like -- it's like -- it's like telling a female co-worker that she's just like one of the guys, when she knows that's not *quite* true because you spend an inordinate amount of time staring at her breasts.

Beat.

ROGER

Do I?

TRACY

Yes.

Uncomfortable beat.

ROGER

If we could just focus again, this was supposed to be a good review.

TRACY

Was it?

ROGER

It was.

TRACY

I'm sorry. Okay, good, though. Good to know. Let's do this, then.

Beat.

ROGER

Phil's been raving about what a hard worker you are. Despite your quota. He says you've been greatly influential in getting the Tender Form Weight Loss Systems name out into the market place, and that your clients have universally positive things to say about you.

TRACY

I work very hard.

ROGER

Wonderful.

TRACY

I am. I'm wonderful.

ROGER

What?

TRACY

I'm sorry, I heard you wrong --

ROGER

Oh.

TRACY

I thought you were calling me wonderful.

ROGER

I said it's wonderful that you're a hard worker.

TRACY

Right -- I get the nuance.

Beat.

ROGER

Look, I'm having a hard time moving on with your performance review. The truth is: there *are* going to be cutbacks.

TRACY

Oh.

ROGER

And we *might* have to let you go.

TRACY

You don't know for sure?

ROGER

Things are up in the air at the moment. I'm sorry. That's why I wasn't going to say anything. This is all so premature. But you kept harping on it, and you seemed so worried and vulnerable that I feel bad lying to you. Hopefully it won't happen, so don't worry --

TRACY

"Don't worry?" Have you listened to anything I've said?

ROGER

Yes --

TRACY

Then do you actually think I'm the type of person who can not worry about something?

ROGER

Choose not to worry. Like that book told you.

TRACY

The book doesn't actually work, Roger. It's a bullshit book, with bullshit theories. Fuck. Fuck! I can't believe you're thinking of firing me. And how you -- I mean, the way you just dropped it into the conversation like that -- after I asked you before -- after you lied to me -- I can't believe you just...like an afterthought, like "FYI, you might be getting fired."

ROGER

I'm sorry, Tracy.

TRACY

So, what can I do?

ROGER

We should know for sure about the cutbacks by Friday.

TRACY

You're saying I can't do anything? I'm just supposed to wait?

Roger shrugs.

Beat. Then, with conviction:

TRACY (cont'd)

I'll fuck you.

ROGER

What?

TRACY

I'll fuck you if you promise not to fire me.

ROGER

Are you trying to get me in trouble?

TRACY

No. If we're being recorded right now, let the record show I was joking.

ROGER

We're not being recorded.

TRACY

Then I wasn't joking. Let's fuck. I know you've thought about it, you're curious --

ROGER

Tracy --

TRACY

I see how you look at me. You say you don't notice my chair, but I've seen you look at it. I see you look at my breasts. I know what you're thinking. You wonder what's paralyzed, you wonder what works.

ROGER

That's not how -- I mean, I wouldn't, uh...

TRACY

But most of all, you wonder if I ever get laid. I do. I get laid all the time. All the necessary parts work. Unless you're into the dead fish thing, in which case, we could try that too...

ROGER

Uh --

TRACY

My therapist says I use humor as a defense mechanism. I think he's an asshole for saying that.

ROGER

Do you?

TRACY

Yes, I think he's an enormous asshole.

ROGER

No, I mean do you use humor as -- I mean, which part of all of *that*, that you just [said] --

TRACY

Oh God, Roger, spit it out.

ROGER

Which part of that was a joke?

TRACY

The dead fish thing -- *that* was a joke. Fucking is...

(running a finger over the surface of Roger's desk, suggestively)

...still on the table.

ROGER

When I went through this conversation in my head before you came in, this is not how I imagined it going.

TRACY

You practiced this conversation?

ROGER

I did.

TRACY

That's sweet.

ROGER

I can't tell if you're being condescending or not.

TRACY

It's genuinely sweet.

So are we fucking or not?

ROGER

Just like that -- "are we fucking or not" is suddenly the question. Wow. This is crazy.

TRACY

You've been so cavalier with me, I can't be cavalier back? After you're all: "FYI, you might be getting fired," I can't be like "FYI, let's fuck." Screw that. FYI, let's fuck.

ROGER

I have to think about this for a second. If anyone found out --

TRACY

They won't.

ROGER

You wouldn't tell anyone?

TRACY

No. FYI, I can see the erection in your pants.

ROGER

That's because, FYI, I'm thinking about your pussy right now.

TRACY

Are you?

ROGER

Yes.

TRACY

Good.

ROGER

Listen --

TRACY

Oh, I'm listening.

ROGER

I want to fuck you. I do --

TRACY

Great.

ROGER

What I'm saying is, it's a very tempting offer -- but if someone found out...

TRACY

My last boyfriend was a model. He was the most gorgeous thing you've ever seen. His body was sick. Not too hard, not too soft, just right.

ROGER

Why are you telling me this?

TRACY

Because I want you to know that I fuck models. And you're not a model by any stretch of the imagination. You would be lucky to fuck me. That's what I'm saying.

ROGER

Jesus.

TRACY

I'm saying I need this job. I'm saying let me help you help me. I'm saying let's fuck. It's really not that hard to understand.

ROGER

Okay. Yeah, let's do this.

TRACY

When?

ROGER

Now.

TRACY

Don't think just because I'm offering sex that's all I have to offer. I'm offering sex because I know that's what you want. And I'm efficient.

ROGER

I understand.

TRACY

Now pull me out of this chair --

ROGER

Okay --

TRACY

Put me up on your desk --

ROGER

Yes --

TRACY

And give me some job security.

Blackout.

SCENE TWO

Roger's office. Later.

Everything's been shoved off Roger's desk, onto the floor. Tracy lies on the desk, her legs splayed open, her skirt hiked up around her waist.

Tracy watches Roger get dressed, unmoved.

TRACY

Oh my God, your ass.

ROGER

You like my ass?

TRACY

It's like two round, firm cantaloupes. It makes me want to go grocery shopping.

ROGER

You're exaggerating.

TRACY

No, it makes me hungry, I mean it. It makes me want to feast on its suppleness. Pull your pants back down.

ROGER

Why?

TRACY

I want to look at it again. Men don't get objectified enough. I'm objectifying you. All you are is a piece of ass to me, so show me a piece of your ass. Come on, baby, don't be shy.

He drops his pants, shows her his ass.

TRACY (cont'd)

Oh, he's doing it. Yes, yes, that's the stuff. That's good. Oh God, I want to bite that sweet, supple fruit.

ROGER

(suddenly self-conscious)

I don't have time for this shit.

Roger pulls his pants back up, buckles them again.

TRACY

It's a shame most people don't get to see the best part of you.

ROGER

We should probably get back to work.

TRACY

I can't get off the desk without your help.

ROGER

Oh, sorry -- I didn't --

TRACY

It's okay.

ROGER

I forgot --

TRACY

Stop fumbling for words and help me.

ROGER

Right.

He lifts her off the desk and back into her chair.

They're awkward together.

It takes several moments to get Tracy situated.

When she's settled back in the chair:

TRACY

Okay, so here's what's about to happen. I've been reading the employee handbook and it's very clear about interpersonal relationships at work.

ROGER

What do you mean?

TRACY

Intercourse. Sex. This. We're not supposed to do this. And when I tell corporate, they're going to fire you.

ROGER

What the fuck are you talking about?

THIS PLAY IS NOT OVER!

Email erik@erikpatterson.org to request a full draft.

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