

Temp Work

by

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AT RISE: An office space. Simple, functional and mind-numbingly drab. UpStage Center is a simple six-foot plastic table, more reminiscent of a school cafeteria than an office. Two plastic molded chairs are pushed up to it. One is empty. In the other sits BEVERLY, 40's, frustrated and almost as inanimate as the papers she is stapling and collating into a huge pile. Every time she staples a paper, she says "Gotcha" in a totally disinterested voice.

Stage Left is a slightly less tacky desk facing the Stage Left wall. In that chair slumps EMILY, 24. She scribbles on a large stack of papers and tries her best not to cringe every time she hears Beverly drone "Gotcha.")

BEVERLY. Gotcha... Gotcha... Gotcha...

EMILY. *(Finally bursting.)* Must you do that?!

BEVERLY. *(Without looking up.)* Gotcha... do what?

EMILY. Say 'Gotcha' every time you staple another file.

BEVERLY. Do I do that?

EMILY. Every day. Every hour. Every minute. Every time you hit that stapler for six straight years.

BEVERLY. Funny. I hadn't noticed.

EMILY. I have. Believe me.

BEVERLY. Wow... that must really be extremely annoying for you.

EMILY. It is.

BEVERLY. I can imagine. *(Staples another file.)* Gotcha...

EMILY. You did it again!

BEVERLY. I know.

EMILY. After I just told you how annoying it is.

BEVERLY. No...*Because* you told me how annoying it is... Gotcha...

EMILY. I don't have to take this you know.

BEVERLY. Then don't... Gotcha...

EMILY. I can leave, you know!

BEVERLY. Be my guest... Gotcha...

EMILY. This is just a temp job for me.

BEVERLY. I believe after six years, the term 'temp job' becomes irrelevant and pretty ironic.

EMILY. What's that supposed to mean?

BEVERLY. Irrelevant? Well, no longer applicable. Moot. Yes, moot. And ironic is...

EMILY. I meant, what does your comment about... Never mind.

BEVERLY. I won't. Gotcha... Gotcha... Gotcha...

EMILY. Where's Alicia?

(Beverly stops stapling. Lowers her voice, conspiratorially.)

BEVERLY. The pit.

EMILY. The pit? What did she do?

BEVERLY. She didn't do anything.

EMILY. And she ended up in the pit anyway?

BEVERLY. That's life, kid. You do your work. Mind your own business... and still, it'll jump up and say... Gotcha...

EMILY. Remind me to hate you all week.

BEVERLY. I'll post it on Facebook.

EMILY. You don't think she's getting..?

BEVERLY. Naw. She's been here the longest.

EMILY. That doesn't mean anything. Remember Lucille?

BEVERLY. Lucille was crazy.

EMILY. Lucille worked here for fourteen years.

BEVERLY. *(Shrugs)* Proves my point.

EMILY. Fourteen years. Then they can you for ‘inflexibility.’

BEVERLY. She should have gone to a chiropractor. Or taken up yoga.

EMILY. That’s not funny.

BEVERLY. It is to me. Gotcha...

EMILY. *(Jumping up.)* If you say Gotcha one more time, I’m going to..!

BEVERLY. You’re going to, what?

(Emily stomps over to the table with murder in her eyes. Suddenly, the Stage Right door opens, and Emily scampers back to her desk, trying frantically to look busy. Beverly begins to staple faster, but without the ‘Gotcha’s.’)

ALICIA enters, Stage Right. She is 34, with hair pulled tightly back and a face puffy with unshed tears. She moves to the empty plastic seat, and drops the large stack of papers she has been clutching to her chest. A moment later, MR. GLAVIN storms out and just stands UpStage, eyeing his workers. It takes a moment for him to say...)

GLAVIN. Ladies.

BEVERLY & EMILY. Good morning, Mr. Glavin.

GLAVIN. This is a ‘no mistakes’ day. I can feel it!

BEVERLY & EMILY. Yes, Mr. Glavin.

GLAVIN. Great. Emily, when you finish that stack, I need to see you in my office.

EMILY. In your office, Mr. Glavin?

GLAVIN. Unless you have someplace else to go? Something more important to do?

EMILY. No. No, sir. I’ll just finish up this stack and be in your office in a jiffy.

GLAVIN. Good. Remember, ladies! It’s a ‘no-mistakes’ day!

(He retreats back into the office, Stage Right. As soon as the door is safely shut, Alicia raises

her head, fuming.)

ALICIA. I'm going to kill him.

EMILY. Why?

ALICIA. Because it's next on my 'to do' list.

BEVERLY. He's not so bad.

ALICIA. Not so bad? Getting your hand stuck in the garbage disposal is not so bad... Finding out you're a carrier for projectile diarrhea is not so bad... Mr. Glavin is worse by a factor of ten.

EMILY. What did he do to you in there?

ALICIA. It's not what he did specifically... it's the way he makes you feel when he's around. It's like I need to take a shower because he oozes that corporate sliminess out of every pore.

EMILY. Did he give you the... "We're the A-Team and A stands for Attitude" speech.

BEVERLY. Followed by the... "Good team players tell the boss everything" sermon?

EMILY. And the "Good workers aren't born, they're pre-fabricated in the assembly line of company policies" talk.

BEVERLY. An oldie, but a goodie.

EMILY. An oldie but a moldie.

ALICIA. I got all the above. Plus a new one. The 'Co-workers aren't limited to 9-5 conversations' pitch.

BEVERLY. That is a new one.

EMILY. Aren't limited to nine to five..? Did he use a corporate mantra to ask you out?

ALICIA. I think so. But he's so oily, I can't be sure. I think he carefully chose his words to avoid a sexual harassment charge, but more than enough to get his point across. When he said he liked the way I fill out my forms, he might have been talking about the PF7-dash-fours... but I don't think so.

EMILY. What else did he say?

ALICIA. He talked about raises and overtime and performance bonuses until my head was spinning. Listening to him when he tries to be obtuse is like trying to watch one

of those blocked cable channels without a descrambler. You see just enough to get an idea of what's going on...but not enough to understand it. You know what I mean?

EMILY. Yeah. He hit on me in corporate-speak three months ago. He made a comment about how being more responsive and opening myself up to a new and exciting directives from the top could bring me much greater satisfaction... When I got offended, he said he was simply advising me how to follow corporate regulations.

BEVERLY. The man is slippery. You have to give him that.

ALICIA. I don't have to give him anything. And I don't intend to either.

EMILY. You know, maybe that's why he doesn't have any permanent employees working at this office? Maybe that's why he only hires temp workers like us. So he can make his plays, and then can us if we complain.

ALICIA. Or don't comply.

(They all lean back and consider this for a moment.)

ALICIA. I think I was right the first time. I'm going to kill him.