

BEWARE! DANGER ZONE!

A COMEDY

BY CHRISTOPHER OWEN

Copyright:
Christopher Owen.

Tel: 020 8888 1751

Email: c.owen718@btinternet.com

Website: www.christopherowen.co.uk

SET:

THE ALMALGAMATED HEALTH AND SAFETY AND HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICE OF A FURTHER EDUCATION COLLEGE.

ON THE BACK WALL IS A WINDOW. ACTORS' STAGE RIGHT, AT AN ANGLE, IS A DESK, BEHIND WHICH ARE 2 CHAIRS. ELSEWHERE 2 MORE CHAIRS. STAGE LEFT THERE IS A DOOR.

CHARACTERS:

JOHN, DIRECTOR OF THE ALMALGAMATED COLLEGE DEPARTMENTS OF HEALTH AND SAFETY AND HUMAN RESOURCES. HE IS IN HIS 50's/ 60's.

PHILIP, HIS DEPUTY.

AMANDA, A MATURE STUDENT.

TIMOTHY, A MATURE STUDENT.

PETER FURNELL, Inspector, Health and Safety, Regional office. (2 lines.)

RICHARD McINTOSH, Diversity and Equality Inspector. (2 lines.)

PRESENT:

JOHN, DIRECTOR OF THE ALMAGAMATED COLLEGE DEPARTMENTS OF HEALTH AND SAFETY AND HUMAN RESOURCES, SEATED AT THE DESK.

PHILIP, HIS DEPUTY, SEATED AT THE DESK.

JOHN: (WITH PAPERS): Amanda Whitcliffe – and Timothy Johnson. Amanda Whitcliffe’s complaint – diversity – Timothy Johnson.

ENTER AMANDA AND TIMOTHY.

JOHN: Ah, Amanda. Good morning. Timothy, Timothy. Now then. Have you met – I don’t think you’ve met my deputy, Philip.

PHILIP: Do call me Phil.

JOHN: Yes. Do call me John. We don’t want any over formality, do we? Now. I’m sorry to hear, Amanda – it’s alright if I call you Amanda?

AMANDA: Yes.

JOHN: I’m very sorry to hear that – it seems – yes – you are bringing a complaint against – er – Timothy – all right, Timothy? – yes – your complaint that he has, I’m sure inadvertently, caused offence to you vis-a-vis your gender. You believe you have been sexually discriminated against. Mm.

AMANDA: I’m a lesbian.

JOHN: Yes. Oh yes. Good show. Er –

AMANDA: And I proud of being a lesbian.

JOHN: Yes. Indeed. Eh, Phil?

PHIL: Too right.

AMANDA: Timothy has told me I mustn’t speak about it, mustn’t tell people I am a lesbian.

JOHN: Ooh. (CHECKING THROUGH PAPER WORK): As you may have heard, due to the cutbacks, Health and Safety of which I am the Director, along with my Deputy Phil, has now been amalgamated with Human Resources - incorporating of course Diversity and Equality. All rather new to me and Phil.

PHIL: Yes.

JOHN: On a learning curve. However - .

TIMOTHY: I am not saying she mustn't be a lesbian.

JOHN and PHIL: Oh no, of course not.

TIMOTHY: But I'm a Christian.

JOHN: Yes.

TIMOTHY: As a Christian – my religion, my Faith - does not allow me to agree with Lesbianism.

JOHN: Dear oh dear – doesn't it? (LOOKING UP PAPERS ON THE SUBJECT).

TIMOTHY: To a fundamentalist Christian lesbianism is an abomination – a sin.

JOHN: Ooh.

AMANDA: You see – you hear what he says – that's sexist, it's an offence, it's contrary to the Diversity and Equality Act 2010, subsequent to the Sexual Orientation Regulation 2003, the Gender Recognition Act 2004, and the Sex Discrimination Act of 1975.

TIMOTHY: I don't want to upset you. I've told her, that I want to be a friend – a colleague – all I'm asking is that – she doesn't go around all the time talking about her lesbianism, being a lesbian.

AMANDA: I'm proud of being a lesbian.

TIMOTHY: I'm proud of being a Christian. Does she have to keep on telling everyone, 'I'm a lesbian, I'm a lesbian. Join the great European Gay, Lesbian, Bi-sexual, Transgender Movement.'

AMANDA: I demand the right to freedom of speech under the Human Rights Act 1998.

JOHN: Now – now then. Very difficult. Quite a stiff one. Now then –

THE TELEPHONE RINGS.

JOHN: (ANSWERING PHONE): Yes. Health and Safety and Human Resources – yes, John speaking. My goodness. Good lord. Dear oh dear. Well – thank you for notifying me. Yes. Yes, do. Keep me up to date. Thank you. (HE RINGS OFF.)

TO PHIL (AND TO AMANDA AND TIMOTHY): That was Building Works. One of the students fallen down a manhole –

PHIL: A maintenance portal.

JOHN: What? A maintenance portal – at the back of the building. He's got himself out, but apparently he might have broken both his legs. They're calling the paramedics to see to him.

PHIL: We can expect the College to receive a claim for compensation.

JOHN: Yes. You see how it is, Amanda, Timothy – Timothy, Amanda.

AMANDA: I'm bringing a complaint against him under the Diversity and Equality Act 2010, the Human Rights Act 1998 - he is attempting to undermine my freedom of expression, diminishing my social identity, making me feel a second class citizen, disempowering.

JOHN: Marginalizing, you might say?

AMANDA: Yes.

JOHN: Oooh.

AMANDA: You are familiar with these Acts?

JOHN: Ah.

PHIL: Refusing to acknowledge a colleague's sexuality could be considered discriminatory.

JOHN: Right-oh.

TIMOTHY: In that case I'm bringing a complaint under the Diversity and Equality Act as it relates to offence to persons of religion. Amanda is attempting to discriminate against me on religious grounds – she is offending my religious beliefs and faith.

JOHN: Are you? Oh.

PHIL: May I suggest, John – we'll have to think about this.

JOHN: Yes.

PHIL: Seek guidance from the Commission for Diversity and Equality.

JOHN: I'm so sorry. We both are, aren't we, Phil. I'm just asking you, both of you, if for the time being, you – er – bury the hatchet, so to speak, try and adapt to each others - er – what's its – and I promise you we'll take advice, as Phil says, and get together and try and sort this problem, sort this out. Eh? You know it's very difficult these days – as I say, with the cuts, HR, Human Resources having amalgamated with H&S, Health and Safety.

AMANDA: I'm not letting this go. If something isn't done I shall go to the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

JOHN: Yes. Well, give us - till tomorrow anyway – eh? Thank you. Timothy, perhaps you'd stay a moment. No, no, no discrimination, Amanda, not going behind backs – oh, no – quite a different matter – see Timothy about quite a different matter – H&S, Health and Safety. Sorry. Thank you, Amanda. Careful as you go – Health and Safety maintenance operatives, in accordance with regulations, have secured the waste paper basket to the floor – at a rather inconvenient location.

AMANDA, AVOIDING THE WASTE PAPER BASKET, EXITS.
TIMOTHY REMAINS.

JOHN: (SORTING OUT PAPERWORK FOR THE ITEM HE IS SEEKING RELATING TO TIMOTHY): Thank you – Timothy.

PHILIP IS LOOKING OUT THROUGH THE OFFICE WINDOW.

PHILIP: That woman – she’s still trying to reverse into a parking space.

JOHN: Reversing? Good, good.

PHIL: Having a lot of difficulty by the looks of it.

JOHN: Reversing. Obeying the regulations, eh? Good.

PHIL: She’s not very good at it. Fact is, John, women have a less developed spatial awareness than men.

JOHN: Nevertheless, regulations – H&S - Health and Safety. Reversing into a static parking bay is safer than reversing out into a road or car park, which may have traffic and pedestrian movement which you cannot easily see.

PHIL: She’s holding up a lot of other drivers.

JOHN: (HAVING FOUND THE PAPER RELATING TO TIMOTHY): Here we are. Now then, Timothy - Tim, it has been reported to me, and Phil, that you were observed walking from the College gates along the avenue of horse chestnut trees, towards the College front entrance while not wearing a hard hat. On Wednesday 13th of this month at 16 hundred hours. Now then. You know very well, Timothy – Tim – you know the Health and Safety regulations – all staff and students of the College, in view of the threat of physical danger to staff and students brought about by the horse chestnuts – the conkers – up there on the horse chestnut trees, all staff and students are required to wear hard hats. Hard hats may be collected from the porters’ gate at the College gates and returned to the aforesaid on leaving the premises. It’s in black and white – if I may be allowed to use the expression – it’s here. Hard hats must be worn when transversing the horse chestnut avenue. Couldn’t be plainer, Timothy, Tim.

PHIL: (AT WINDOW): There’s someone else out there on the horse chestnut avenue not wearing a hard hat.

JOHN: Good lord. (LOOKING THROUGH THE WINDOW) My goodness. What is the world coming to?! You see, Timothy. Any moment

now, a conker may inadvertently detach itself from the twig on which it has sprouted and ripened, and may fall, down, down, onto the head of that poor vulnerable criminal – student – member of staff – visitor. Tragedy. For him, for the parents, for the College – the Nation - don't do it again. Right.

PHONE RINGS:

JOHN: Hello. Yes. Health and Safety, Human Resources – John speaking. Right. Good lord. Really. Dear oh dear. Keep me posted. Thank you. (TO PHIL AND TIM): The student who fell down the maintenance portal, legs broken – the paramedics are unable to come and attend him at this time. They are on their mandatory 30 minute rest break. I'm sure there is not one member of the ambulance service who would not come straight away if permitted, but they have been allocated their 30-minute meal breaks and these are, as I understand, non-negotiable. I think that is so, is it, Phil?

PHIL: Yes, John. Quite so. The Central West Ambulance Service Trust takes its statutory health and safety duties for all staff very seriously.

JOHN: There we are, Timothy – Tim.

PHIL: In line with national guidelines negotiated and agreed by Unison, which must be adhered to by all ambulance trusts nationally under the Agenda for Change scheme, it is considered imperative that all staff have dedicated 30 minute rest breaks, which cannot be interrupted.

JOHN: There we are then. There is so much to consider, you, see, Tim. Tim. So much of which to be cognizant. The hard hats, chestnut trees, conkers on head – it's all here – somewhere – yes – always under the threat of court action, claims for compensation. Massive. That young fellow, student, remember? – tripped on going up the stairs, fell, broke his hip – College insurers obliged to pay out £60,000.

PHIL: 60,000.

JOHN: 60,000. All because he didn't hold onto the stair hand rail. 60,000. Holding onto the stair hand rails on ascending and descending the stairs is mandatory. The notices to this effect everywhere – you can't have missed them. And? And there they are, students, even some staff – ascending and descending, not using the stairs hand rails. God help us.

THE PHONE RINGS.

JOHN: Health and Safety, Human Resources – John speaking. What? No.
(TO PHIL): There's a boy up in a horse chestnut tree.

PHILL GOES TO LOOK OUT THROUGH WINDOW.

JOHN (CONT'D): No. Well, you'll have to phone the fire brigade – no, we can't do anything about it – no, students, staff, no – we're not trained in rescuing boys from trees, we haven't the vocational qualifications for such an enterprise.

PHIL: I can see him. Over half way up a tree.

JOHN: (ON PHONE): Yes – the fire brigade. (HE RINGS OFF.)

PHIL: That woman out there – she still trying to reverse into that parking space. Lot of bad feelings, lot of gesticulating by other drivers and people.

JOHN: Well, Timothy, Tim – I think we've covered everything – yes – er – hard hats – do remember in future.

TIMOTHY MAKES FOR THE DOOR TO EXIT AS

AMANDA ENTERS.

TIMOTHY EXITS.

AMANDA: I am bringing a complaint against Mr Jackson. He's a bully – he's been bullying me.

JOHN: Fred Jackson? Fred? Lecturer, Creative and Media Studies?

AMANDA: He's criticised me.

JOHN: Oh.

AMANDA: He said he disagreed with what I was saying about Julia Burton's book AQA Media Studies, he told me to read Noam Chomsky's Mind Control, I said I had read it, he said read it again, carefully this time.

JOHN: I see.

AMANDA: He said to me in front of all the class.

JOHN: Did he?

AMANDA: He's undermined me. Publicly humiliated me.

JOHN: He criticised you?

AMANDA: This is an abuse of power. He's made me feel upset, threatened, humiliated, and vulnerable.

PHIL: Oh dear.

AMANDA: He has undermined my self confidence. I have been psychologically terrorised.

PHIL: Oh dear, yes. An abuse of power.

PHONE RINGS.

PHIL PICKS UP THE PHONE.

PHIL: Health and safety. Human Resources – deputy lead Phil speaking.

JOHN: Thank you.

PHIL: It's the Principal's office. (INTO PHONE): Good gracious. Yes. Here's here. I'll tell him. How dreadful. My-oh-my. Right-oh. You'll get back to us. Thank you. (RINGS OFF) (TO JOHN): Principal's office. Mrs Stephens has been shot.

JOHN: Doris Stephens?

PHIL: Her fiancée – shot her. She's out there –

JOHN: (RISING TO THE WINDOW) Out there?

PHIL: Under the trees – the horse chestnut avenue.

JOHN: Good God.

PHIL: There she is.

JOHN: Where?

PHIL: There. On the ground.

JOHN: Doris Stephens. How dreadful, dreadful. Poor, poor dear darling woman. Doris – Stephens.

PHIL: The police have been called.

JOHN: God help us – someone help her. She needs help, Phil.

AMANDA: Over one million individuals are the victims of bullying in the workplace each year.

JOHN: What?

AMANDA: This is said to be around 15% of all violent crimes committed annually in the United Kingdom.

PHIL: She's been doing her reading.

JOHN: Good gracious. Doris Stephens, Phil.

AMANDA: Mr Jackson's continuing and persistent attitude towards me has given me migraine headaches, hypertension, diarrhoea - and a cough. And I've lost my sense of humour.

JOHN: Yes. Doris, Doris.

PHIL: Poor show. I wonder if you'd be good enough to write out your report – so much easier to attend to – few forms here also.

JOHN: Yes. Good idea. Well done.

AMANDA: I'm not going to be fobbed off. I'm a leading member of the Student Union Gay, Lesbian, Bi-Sexual and Transgender Anti-bullying Group.

JOHN: Oh. Aah. Fear not.

PHIL: Your case shall be seriously considered.

JOHN: (UNINTENTIONALLY SHARPLY): Please leave. Look out for the waste paper basket.

AMANDA EXITS.

JOHN: Doris Stephens, Phil. May I – may I call you Phph?

PHIL: Of course.

JOHN: Phph.

PHIL: Yes, Jer.

JOHN: I love her, Phph. Doris – Doris Stephens. In Accounts. Wonderful woman.

PHI: Doris Stephens – she’s that young girl – about – well in her twenties.

JOHN: Yes. Lovely girl. Mad about her. Can’t stop thinking about her, day and night. Night and day. (SINGS FIRST LINE OF NIGHT AND DAY): ‘Night and day, you are the one, Only you beneath the moon or under the sun, Whether near to me, or far, Its no matter darling where you are I think of you.’

PHIL: Bit young for you, isn’t she, John?

JOHN: Don’t you start that! I’m not having that said to me! Saying I’m too old. Old! That’s ageism, Phil - Phph. You start that with me, and I’ll have you up before the Diversity and Equality Commission - Offences Against The Chronologically Mature Directives.

PHIL: I’m so sorry, John – sorry, Jer – I had no intention of offending you – most clumsy of me. How factually encumbered of me.

JOHN: What?

PHIL: Ignorant.

JOHN: Oh, yes. Forgiven. You’re forgiven, old chap. Not to worry, Phph. Doris Stephens. A wonderful woman, if there ever was one. Huge bosom, Phph. Wonderful personality. Lovely round face. Always a ready smile. Mad about her. Dream about her. Lie in bed at night thinking of her. The

woman is adorable. She's forever engaged to that dreadful man – Barry. Bastard. She loves him, can you imagine? That fellow.

PHIL: Barry – the termination specialist.

JOHN: What?

PHIL: He's tried to shoot her before – tried to kill her.

JOHN: Oh – yes. Terrible. And she's forgiven him. Doris Stephens and Barry, and bloody old John here is well out of the picture, Phph. Nothing doing. John here, a broken reed, Phph. Dream of her all the time. It's left me well and truly out of sorts.

PHIL: I myself am feeling satisfaction deprived.

JOHN: What? Yes. Yes?

PHIL: My wife has been arrested. Tricia.

JOHN: Good gracious, I am sorry. What happened?

PHIL: She was walking with little Timothy.

JOHN: Timothy, yes – your 3 yr old.

PHIL: They were walking in the park – yesterday. Timothy riding his little bike – stabilizers on the wheels, you know. The park warden told her riding a bike in the park was against regulations. Timothy would have to alight. The wife - beg your pardon - my wife, Tricia can get rather, what shall we say – self assertive. She told the park warden the child wouldn't get off his bike, that he wasn't a nuisance or danger to anyone, neither to himself – the stabilizers. The park warden ordered her and little Timothy to leave the park. She refused. He called the police.

JOHN: And they arrested her?

PHIL: Not before Tricia had hit the park warden slap bang on the nose, John.

JOHN: Oh. Oh dear.

PHIL: Well - the warden targeted her, didn't she? – that's what got to her. There were these disruptive youths hanging around the park, teenagers with a pitbull terrier, drinking beer, he didn't, wasn't going to do anything about them, confront them, no. Tricia, a three year old on a bike with stabilizers, they're an easy target. I contact the Parks Department – complained – they said the by-law in operation in the park states that cycles are permitted, but people have to walk with them and push them along rather than ride on them. I said, but the child is only 3, and the bike had stabilizers. The fellow in the office, he says to me, we can't have one regulation for one and another for others.

JOHN: Well – I do understand you feeling – er – um –

PHIL: - satisfaction deprived.

JOHN: Yes. (POSSIBLE SOUND OUTSIDE OF CAR HITTING ANOTHER): Hello.

PHIL: (AT THE WINDOW): The woman, reversing – she's reversed into a Volvo estate.

JOHN: Good lord.

PHIL: Looks as if she's got into a fight – there's three of them at it. Ah, there we are – the police have arrived for your Doris Stephens.

JOHN: What?

PHIL: They've arrived – there they are – down by the horse chestnuts – keeping out of sight.

JOHN: What are they doing? Poor darling Doris Stephens – why aren't they going to her – she's been shot, for god's sake.

PHONE RINGS.

JOHN: (INTO PHONE): Hello – Health and Safety, Human resources – John – What? What?! For God's sake. The woman has been shot – she may be bleeding to death. What? (RINGS OFF) (TO PHIL): The police – they're not going in to see to her – they say the killer, her fiancée is still around there. They can't take the risk.

PHIL: The boy in the tree – there's someone climbing up to him – climbing up to help him down.

JOHN: What? Good gracious. No, no. Who is he? He looks like that chap who owns the corner shop. That's him. The Asian. Nothing wrong with Asians. Or corner shops. But that's him. No, no. Has he got the qualifications? No. You can bet your life he hasn't. Not got the vocational

training. Climbing up. One of our horse chestnut trees. I'm phoning the police. The man's trespassing. Do you hear? My God! (DIALING) What is this world coming to?! Is there no rhyme or reason?! No bloody common sense?! Climbing up to help that boy down and no certifiable qualifications! Come on, come on.

A MAN (PETER FURNELL) ENTERS.

PETER FURNELL: Good morning. Peter Furnell - Inspector, Health and Safety, Regional office – surprise, surprise! – unannounced inspection.

JOHN: Ah. Aaah. Mr Furnell. Health and Safety inspector. Lovely, lovely. Come in, come in. (SOUND OF POLICE GUNFIRE, POLICE SIRENS.)

PHIL: They've shot the corner shop owner, who's climbed up to help the boy down.

JOHN: Serve him right. (TO PETER FURNELL): Just another day, you know. This is my deputy Phph. Mind you don't trip on the waste paper basket.

PETER FURNELL DOES TRIP OVER IT.

JOHN: Too late.

A MAN (RICHARD McINTOSH) ENTERS.

MAN: Good morning. Richard McIntosh – Diversity and Equality Inspector – unannounced inspection.

JOHN: Oh, fuck off.

END.