

**EXTRACTS FROM**

**BEWARE! DANGER ZONE!**

**A COMEDY**

**BY CHRISTOPHER OWEN**

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**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.*)

## **FIRST EXTRACT:**

### **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.

## **END OF THE FIRST EXTRACT.**

### **SECOND EXTRACT:**

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 13<sup>th</sup> 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.

## **THE END OF THE SECOND EXTRACT**

### **THIRD EXTRACT:**

JOHN: What are the police 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.

## **THE END OF THE EXTRACTS**