

Ever-Changing Winds

"Can you believe it?"

Rita sighed, shook her head.

"The 'Foundations Party'. Of all the people to put into power, why *them*? Bunch of backwards-thinking loons. Unbelievable."

The woman speaking – one of Rita's colleagues – growled. Actually growled. And, when Rita didn't say anything, the woman – rather than taking it as a cue to leave – continued talking instead.

"Misogynists, the lot of them. And now we're stuck with their 'traditionalist' bullshit for the next few years. Can't wait for all the propaganda about the 'nuclear family' and how women should stay at home to raise kids. It's disgusting."

"I've gotta get back to work," Rita said, barely managing to keep herself from rolling her eyes. "Nice talking to you."

She hurried away before the woman had a chance to speak again.

Honestly, what were people so annoyed about? So some small, insignificant political party with extreme views had somehow come out ahead in the recent elections. Wasn't like they'd actually be able to do anything about their wacky views – there'd be all kinds of checks and balances in place to prevent that.

At the end of the day, people just liked to worry and moan. About politics especially.

Rita, though? She didn't have time for that nonsense.

Some dumb political party thought she should be at home looking after kids? Joke's on them – she didn't *have* kids. Didn't have a husband to clean and cook for. Didn't so much as have a boyfriend. Thirty-five and happily married to her work.

And, speaking of work, she had a lot of it to do.

No time for chatting with colleagues, no time to worry about politics, no time to dally. The chair in her office called to her, her computer singing its siren call of simple, productive joy.

Leave all that other stuff to the people who cared.

It wouldn't affect Rita. It never did.

A tap on her office door snapped Rita out of her productive work.

Her eyes shot up just as the door was sliding open, revealing a scrawny-looking man in his early or mid twenties. Swept back hair and a neat suit, though with an obvious nervous energy about him.

"Hi," the guy said. "I'm John."

Rita stared at him.

"I'm..." He blushed, fumbled. "I'm John. Your new intern? I was told to come here. I'm-"

"Intern?" Rita raised an eyebrow. "This is the first I'm hearing about a new intern."

"The boss, Mr... uhh..." John glanced around, perhaps hoping that one of Rita's office walls might help him here. "Mr Tanner. He told me-"

"Sit," Rita pointed at the chair opposite her desk. "And be quiet."

John paled, walked towards the desk and sat down.

It took all of two minutes to call her boss, listen to the fat man tell her what was going on. She'd been requesting a secretary for months, someone to help her organise her work and take unimportant calls and schedule appointments. Someone to give Rita more time to actually *work*. But every request she'd made had been ignored or declined. The company, she was told, simply didn't have the money to hire anyone new.

John – an intern right out of college – was supposed to be the answer to that problem.

A guy with no working experience, who had no clue how to operate the software the

company used, and who'd almost certainly make Rita's job more *difficult*.

Great. Just great.

She hung up the phone, graciously accepting this additional *burden* to her job. Pissing off her boss by declining the intern would've been a stupid move, after all.

"John," she said, looking over the table at him. "That's your name right? John."

"Uhh. Yes ma'am."

"Dark with a splash of milk, nothing fancy. With a blueberry muffin on the side."

John's eyebrows raised in confusion.

Rita held back a sigh. This was going to be a pain.

"My coffee," she told him, nodding to her office door. "Go. Fetch."

It took the idiot a few more seconds to put it all together.

He shot to his feet, face red.

"Right," he said, rushing to the office door. "Yes! Right away!"

As he raced out of her office to get the muffin and coffee, Rita leaned back in her seat. She sighed, rolled her eyes.

Great. One more thing she'd have to do around here. Taking care of the useless intern. With any luck, she'd be able to keep him occupied with menial, brain-dead tasks. Fetching things for her and what-not. Anything to keep him as far away from her office and interrupting her work as possible.

She shut her apartment door behind herself, breathed a happy sigh as she kicked off her shoes.

Nothing beat that feeling – coming home from a long day of work, letting go and relaxing. She slipped her business blazer off her shoulders, set it neatly down and then unbuttoned her blouse and walked over to her large apartment's sofa.

The TV was on in seconds.

What time was it? Her eyes flicked to the clock, saw that the daily broadcast was only a few minutes away.

She rolled her eyes, got comfortable on the sofa.

Ever since the new 'Foundations Party' had come to power, they'd made it mandatory for everyone – no matter who they were – to watch these daily broadcasts. There were heavy fines for those that didn't, and Rita had heard of at least a few people who'd actually received those fines.

Apparently, government agents were going around asking people questions about the content of the broadcasts. If the people couldn't answer, they were smacked with a fine.

It was annoying. Who wanted to watch a half-hour, silly broadcast every day after work? But what choice did she have?

It'd be over quickly enough, at least. Then she could watch a film or something. Maybe listen to some music.

When the broadcast started, Rita stared at her TV screen absently.

Pictures of lovely houses appeared on it. Happy families and laughing children and beautiful wives. Husbands in suits and women in dresses and happiness all around. Words followed the images; soft-spoken, soothing words. Though she wasn't really paying attention to what was being said, Rita felt the words sinking into her mind. Soothing her. Relaxing her.

Before long, new images started to appear. Unhappy women in stiff suits. Women stressed out from their work, living unfulfilling lives. Their bitterness, the hollowness in their hearts, the loneliness. Women who were missing some vital part of themselves. A part they desperately needed to be whole.

In almost the blink of an eye, the broadcast ended.

Half an hour had vanished and Rita was left sitting there confused. Had she fallen

asleep? Zoned out?

She shook her head.

Hopefully no government officers would question her about the broadcast. Last thing she needed was to be fined because she hadn't been paying attention.

"John," Rita found herself saying. She looked up from her work, the numbers and words that – with each new day – seemed so much more difficult to grasp. "How long have you been my intern now?"

"A few months," the man shrugged. "Why?"

"I just..." She fidgeted, tugged at her business blazer. No matter how much she adjusted the thing, it never seemed to fit right on her. "I was just wondering, how do you do it?"

"How do I do what?" He asked, confused.

"Work under me," Rita blushed, looked away. "I mean, you're so much more skilled and talented than me. You actually know what you're doing and me... I have to pretend half the time. How can you sit there without getting mad at me for being here?"

Again, John shrugged.

"It's not right," Rita whispered.

"It's not," her intern agreed. "But it will be. You hear that new law they're gonna pass? The 'workplace aptitude designation' or whatever it's called."

"Yeah..."

"Pretty soon," John smiled, "it'll be illegal for me to work under you. Females will be legally required to work under men, and it'll be illegal for them to have a higher rank than any male co-workers. Our roles will have to be switched – that is, if the boss doesn't just fire you outright."

Rita was silent for a long while. Her slow, female brain having difficulty with the thoughts in her head. But she got there eventually.

Without saying a word, she stood up, walked around her desk.

John raised an eyebrow at her.

"It's going to happen anyway," she told him. "Might as well get ahead of the curve. I should be sitting there," she pointed to John's seat. "And you should be the one behind the desk..."

John grinned, stood.

As he circled the table to take his rightful place, Rita sat down on the now-former intern's chair.

"Right then," John said, taking his seat. "I think I'll have a dark. A splash of milk and a blueberry muffin. Think you can handle that, Rita?"

"I..." She inhaled a deep breath, nodded her head, rose from her seat. "Yes sir..."

Her internship was almost over!

She'd been working for Mr John for almost a year now. That meant her internship would end soon! Rita couldn't contain her excitement – she let out a girlish, bright giggle.

Just a few more weeks and then...

What *would* happen when her internship ended?

She froze mid-skip, glanced down at herself.

Tube top and miniskirt – as per the company's regulation for female staff. Not that there were many women working here any more. Most had taken maternity leave and never come back.

Would she... Would she have to stop working here too?

It wouldn't be the worst thing. She was a woman. Her place as at home, cleaning and cooking and raising kids. Work was a man's place. She didn't belong here. But... But what about Mr John?

Who'd fetch him his coffee and muffins? Who'd be there to listen to him complain about unhappy clients and sooth his anger with their mouth? Perhaps... Maybe the company would give her a full time job here instead. Make her Mr John's personal secretary.

She'd have to ask him.

If she remembered.

Remembering things was difficult. Whenever she tried, it made her head hurt. But she could try...

"Ouch!" Rita gasped, hand shooting to her head.

Nope. Trying to remembering things still hurt.

But, on the bright side, her hair *did* look pretty today. Two big pigtails. Perfect handles for Mr John to hold on to.

She liked working under him. Both as his intern, and literally underneath him. He was a good boss. He knew *exactly* where a female like Rita belonged. And he wasn't shy when it came to reminding her either!

She forgot sometimes. Forgot where she belonged.

Rita shook her head, pushed all the silly thoughts out of it.

She had a book! 'Knocked Up By Your Boss', a government issued book for all women still in the workplace. It was great! It taught Rita everything she needed to know about being a working woman. The number one lesson being that she *shouldn't* be one.

Rita smiled.

She entered Mr John's office, wearing the brightest and happiest smile imaginable! It was, after all, a woman's job to always smile for the men in her life.

Without hesitating, she walked over to Mr John's desk and climbed down onto her knees – crawled under it and took her rightful place. She didn't need to be told to unzip his pants or to take out his penis. Nor did she need to be told to put it in her mouth and take care of it for him.

She was a good female! She knew *exactly* where her place was.

In the back of her mind, a thought wiggled around. A feeling that she was supposed to be doing something. She was supposed to be asking Mr John about something.

She spat his penis out of her mouth, scrunched her brow really hard!

What was she supposed to ask him?

"Rita?" Mr John's voice cut through the silence.

There wasn't supposed to be silence. There was supposed to be gagging and choking and slurping and-

"I'm sorry," Rita said quickly. "I'm sorry sir! There's something I was supposed to ask you, but I've forgotten what..."

Mr John pushed his chair back, looked down at her under his desk.

"I'm sorry," Rita repeated, looking down at the floor.

"Something you wanted to ask..." Mr John hummed for a moment, thinking. "Does it have anything to do with your internship coming to an end?"

"Yes!" Rita gasped happily. "I think so!"

"Hmm..."

Rita waited.

"Ah!" Mr John said after a moment. "I think I know what it is. And the answer is yes, Rita."

"Yay!" Rita clapped happily, though she wasn't *exactly* sure what Mr John was agreeing to. "Thank you!"

"Nothing to thank me for," Mr John smiled. "You've earned it. This is no place for a female, anyway. With your internship coming to an end, it's about time you focused on doing your *true* duty to society: becoming a mother. You deserve that joy, Rita. And yes, I'll happily be the father for you."

Yes! Of course! *That's* what she'd wanted to ask!

"Thank you!" She clapped happily as Mr John rolled his chair forward again. "Thank you! Than-"

Her word was cut off as she slid his penis back in her mouth.

Exactly where it belonged.