

"HAPPY BIRTHDAY"

INT. MIKE'S OFFICE - DAY

OLIVER sits across the desk from MIKE, who is wearing a party hat. Oliver's is on the desk in front of him and an obnoxiously large birthday badge weighs on the front of his shirt. The office and the bullpen beyond are strung with birthday bunting and confetti litters every surface. Through the window, we see two colleagues in party hats setting up a giant birthday card at Oliver's desk in the bullpen. There are few other coworkers at their desks.

OLIVER

I just think that it's time for a new chapter in my life, I've been here a long-

Mike's computer rings: he is getting a video call.

MIKE

One moment please.

He answers the call and begins talking to the person on the other end. Oliver sighs and looks through the glass wall at ALEX, who gives him a thumbs up. He half-heartedly returns the gesture.

After a moment, Mike hangs up the call.

MIKE

Apologies, Oliver. Where were we?

OLIVER

I'm ready to move on and explore some other opportunities.

MIKE

What do you mean by that, exactly?

OLIVER

Well, I'm getting older-

There is a knock at the door and MARY enters.

MARY

Just a quick one. It's important.

Mike nods wearily and she hurries to his side and begins talking quietly. Oliver tries to shift his chair away from the desk but it's clunky and loud.

Bits and pieces of the conversation become more audible, despite their attempts at whispering.

MARY

...it's not just that they're taking the time off, none of us have been able to contact any of them.

MIKE

And their families?

MARY

It's against company policy to contact family unless there's an emergency-

MIKE

They could be missing! What constitutes an emergency if not that?

Mary opens her mouth to respond and closes it again, humbled. She hurries out of the room.

OLIVER

(tense)

As I was saying, I'm at a point in life where-

MIKE

I'm sorry Oliver, I can't let you resign at this time.

Oliver is lost for words.

MIKE

(Cont'd)

I know that you're long overdue a pay rise-

Mike's computer starts ringing again. He mumbles an apology and answers the call. Oliver can't take it anymore: he stands up and tries to push his chair back but it barely moves. He pushes it onto its side in frustration and turns to Mike.

OLIVER

I QUIT! I'M LEAVING I, I-

MIKE

OLIVER!

Mike hurries to hang up the call.

OLIVER
I'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF THIS FUCKING NIGHTMARE

MIKE
YOU CAN'T QUIT WE'LL HAVE NO EMPLOYEES LEFT

Oliver fumbles with the birthday badge before ripping it off, tearing a hole in his shirt in the process, and slamming it on Mike's desk.

OLIVER
I QUIT I QUIT I QUIT I QUIT

He wrenches open the door and runs into the bullpen, followed by Mike, who is close to tearing his own hair out.

All eyes are on Oliver. Mike tries to catch his arm and Oliver turns, grabs him by the shoulders and shakes him.

OLIVER
FUCKING FIRE ME GOD DAMMIT

FREEZEFRAME:
Oliver holding Mike's shoulders, strong eye contact, Oliver looking desperate and frustrated, Mike looking terrified. The other employees stare in horror. Everything is covered in party decorations.

SUPER: "3 "DAYS" EARLIER"

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY

The hum of the elevator's mechanics is almost overwhelming. The room is suffocatingly small with no mirror and the fluorescent light flickers inconsistently.

The doors open and Oliver (30, office attire) steps in. He has clearly tried to appear smart but looks rushed around the edges.

He pushes the button and turns to face the doors as they close. A swollen fly lands on his lapel and he brushes it off with disgust, pulling at his collar.

His phone dings in his pocket and he looks at a message from "Mike (Boss)" that says "You made it here yet? Pop into the breakroom for a chat ASAP please. :)". He doesn't respond.

The doors open and he steps into the corridor but immediately stops in his tracks. The lights are all out, blinds drawn, the rows upon rows of office cubicles silent and empty. He takes out his phone torch and, in its light, he sees a single piece of confetti on the ground. He turns off the torch and heads into the breakroom.

INT. - BREAKROOM, DAY

The lights turn on.

COWORKERS
(varying levels of enthusiasm)
SURPRISE!

Oliver pretends to be surprised.

His coworkers are gathered around the table in neon party hats, tooting party-horns. There is a cake on the table that says "Happy Birthday Olive!" in messy red icing. Everything else in the room is beige as if the saturation has been turned down, making the brightness of the cheap party decor even more jarring.

MIKE (older, well dressed) approaches Oliver and claps him on the back as the other employees start to prep the cake.

MIKE
Congratulations, Oliver, you've made it through another year in this shithole.

OLIVER
Thanks. I like the cake.

MIKE
Ah that was Mary's idea, she-
(he notices the mistake)
Ah. ...I'll have to have a word with the calligrapher on that one.

He winks at Oliver and tries to subtly put an icing tube into his own pocket. Oliver pretends not to notice.

ALEX (mid 20's) draws his attention from his other side and offers a plate of cake, which he takes.

ALEX
Happy birthday, oldie

OLIVER
OI. I'm only thirty.

ALEX
You're basically my grandad

He starts to eat the cake but they stop him and pull out a lighter, which they light.

ALEX
We're not allowed candles.

He smiles, leans in and blows out the flame. He locks eyes with ALEX and hesitates for a moment before pulling away. His coworkers cheer, snapping him back to reality. Those with cake begin to disperse, clapping him on the back or mumbling congratulations as they go back to their desks. Alex smiles at him awkwardly then hurries off to their desk. He watches them go.

INT. OFFICE - NIGHT

Oliver is at his desk. He is sporting a comically large birthday badge and there are cards and envelopes scattered around his computer. The monitor is wearing his party hat.

The coworker at the desk next to him stands, packing up for the night, and Oliver realises the time: 5:00 PM. He sighs and turns off his computer, packs his bag and leaves.

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

The alarm sounds: 7:00 AM. Oliver turns it off, yawns and, eyes closed, rolls out of bed and crashes onto the floor. He groans.

INT. - ELEVATOR, DAY

Oliver waits inside the elevator as it creaks up to his floor. Two flies buzz in lazy squares above his head. His phone dings in his pocket and he looks at a message from "Mike (Boss)" that says "Chat in the breakroom ASAP please. :)". He scrolls up, looking for the message from "yesterday", but it is gone.

He steps out of the elevator into the darkness again and sees confetti glowing on the floor. He heads into the breakroom.

INT. - BREAKROOM, DAY

The lights turn on.

COWORKERS
(varying levels of enthusiasm)
SURPRISE!

OLIVER
What's going on?

His coworkers are gathered around the table again, but one of them is missing. The beige cupboards are strung with garish bunting and the cake says "Happy Bithday Olive!" in sloppy red icing.

To be continued....