

HIDDEN AGENDER

By

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## Cast of Characters

<u>MO</u> :	Junior reporter at the Courier
<u>LOU</u> :	Ditto
<u>LES</u> :	Ditto
<u>PAT</u> :	Ditto
<u>REGAN</u> :	The Editor

ACT I

Scene 1

*We are in a newspaper office. MO is sitting at a desk, yawning, feet up on the desk. LOU enters in a rush.*

LOU

The train got stuck in a tunnel and there weren't any announcements and I couldn't get a signal and....

*LOU falls silent, and look around, registering the empty office.*

LOU

Where is everyone?

MO

Food poisoning.

LOU

Food poisoning? What - the whole office?

MO

That's the risk you run when everyone chooses the prawn curry.

LOU

Blimey. That wasn't a very successful team building dinner, was it?

MO

Well, it depends. Apparently everyone is WhatsApping each other pictures of their vomit-strewn bedcovers and bonding tremendously.

LOU

Thank fuck I'm a vegan.

MO

Ditto.

LOU

*(thoughtfully)* Les and Pat are vegans too. So why aren't *they* here?

*Groaning noises from offstage. LES appears, clutching their head.*

MO

Being a vegan didn't seem to stop one downing two bottles of house red, did it?

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LES

Oh fuck, my head! Anyone got a Nurofen?

LOU

Check my coat pocket

*LES fumbles blindly in the pocket of the coat LOU has flung over a chair.*

LES

Tic tacs, tissues....condom?

LOU

Well, you never know. Be prepared.

LES

Tart.

*MO throws LES a packet of chewable aspirins.*

MO

Here.

LES

Pat here yet?

MO

Nope.

*LES is belatedly becoming aware of the empty office.*

LES

Hang on, where is everyone?

LOU

Throwing up down their toilets.

LES

You're joking!

MO

Sadly not.

LES

So - what's going to happen about today's edition?

MO

I've got an email here from Regan. They say it's down to us.

LOU

What?

MO

Tomorrow's online edition. We've got to put it together.

LES

But we're just junior reporters!

MO

Not today, we're not! We're in charge.

*Silence while the three reporters let this sink in.*

LOU

Well, it's not as if we need to produce the whole thing. We've got the usual generated headline stories, and articles. Its just a question of layout and prioritising isn't it?

LES

Yeeees.

MO

So let's get cracking.

LES

It just seems a shame.

LOU

What d'you mean?

LES

Well. It's an opportunity isn't it?

MO

You thinking of awarding yourself a top journalism award or something!?

LES

No. Just - we've got a bit of a platform for the day haven't we? We could have some fun!

LOU

Thought you had a headache?

LES

It's starting to wear off!

MO

So - what were you thinking? I don't want to do anything which will get me fired, I've just moved into a new flat.

LOU

In Docklands, yeah. You never let us forget it.

LES

Just - have a bit of a laugh. Put in a made-up story and see if anyone believes it.

MO

Like an April Fool's Day feature?

LOU

Example - Waitrose has started giving away free bags of weed..?

LES

Mmm. Something like that.

MO

Well, if it's just something harmless like that, I'm up for it.

LOU

It's a good way to check if anyone actually reads the online edition!

MO

Like putting random words in the middle of a report about shoplifting ?

LOU

Yosemite? Pterodactyl? Penile implants?

MO

That was one of my best, you gotta admit.

LES

So we'll go for it?

LOU

Yeah, why not!

MO

It'll be a laugh...

LES

We've just got to think of something good.

Scene 2

*The three junior reporters MO, LOU and LES are busily engaged in their jape, all huddled together over a computer screen. PAT enters, a character with a darker personality.*

MO

What time do you call this?

*LOU and LES laugh appreciatively.*

PAT

Who put you in charge?

MO

It's just a joke, Pat... Aren't you going to ask where everyone else is?

PAT

No. Because I look at my WhatsApps.

LOU

You're in the editorial WhatsApp group?

PAT

Yeah. What can I say? I'm a good networker.

LES

Must be your charming personality.

PAT

What's that?

LES

Nothing, Pat.

*PAT stares at LES until LES moves out of what PAT clearly considers is "their" chair. PAT slumps down in it, and puts their feet up on the desk, then closes their eyes.*

LOU

D'you wanna know what we're up to, Pat?

PAT

*(without opening their eyes)* Not particularly.

*MO is undaunted.*

MO

We're writing a fake story! To see if anyone falls for it.

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PAT

*(opening one eye, vaguely interested)* Yeah?

LES

We're saying that Boris and Carrie are hosting a rave at Chequers!

LOU

This Saturday!

MO

We can print a retraction day after next and say it was just an editorial error.

*MO, LOU and LES are convulsed with mirth. PAT takes their feet off the desk.*

PAT

Why would you waste a golden opportunity like that?

LES

What d'you mean, Pat?

PAT

You've got a captive audience and you're in charge of putting out a message. So. Why the half measures? Why a stupid little joke about Boris when you could be conveying something big?

MO

Because - we're just doing it for a laugh?

PAT

A laugh? You should be doing it as a test.

LOU

A test?

PAT

Yeah. A test of what you can get away with.

LES

But we didn't want to go too far with it, Pat.

PAT

And that's why you'll always be a bunch of nobodies, isn't it? Do you think Columbus would have discovered America if he hadn't wanted to go too far? Or Neil Armstrong was about to set foot on the moon, and he said "I'd better not, it might be going too far"?

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