

What a good boy

By Jacquie Penrose

Lucy Lockett (mid/late twenties, may appear younger)

Jack Horner (mid/late thirties, may appear older)

2 chairs downstage facing front, not close together. An office coffee machine, recycling bin.

Both characters address the audience directly. They are not necessarily in the same space or time. They listen, sometimes watch, but do not necessarily hear or react. Jack in particular may sometimes attend to his phone while Lucy is speaking.

Lucy: Lucy Lockett. That's me. Ridiculous don't you think? If your name was Lockett you'd think you'd think twice about naming your daughter Lucy. Maybe they thought the double T made all the difference. Or maybe they'd never heard of her. Of course I could change it, but once I was old enough to realise that changing your name was actually an option I began to think fuck it, it's my name. And once you've heard Lucy Locket lost her pocket yadiya as many times as I have you become immune to it. So fuck 'em. I'm Lucy Lockett.

Or maybe you don't know what I'm talking about. The nursery rhyme? Lucy Locket lost her pocket, Kitty Fisher found it? Who the hell is Kitty Fisher? No one remembers nursery rhymes any more, apparently. Plenty do, though, believe me. Lucy Locket lost her pocket, Kitty Fisher found it, nothing in it, nothing in it, just the binding round it. Go on, google it. It'll tell you all about Kitty Fisher. A well-known tart, apparently.

He said that. Just be grateful they didn't call you Kitty Fisher. The well-known tart. Thanks Jack. Very grateful. From the man called Jack Horner. Little Jack Horner. He thought the whole thing hilarious. Jack Horner meets Lucy Lockett.

Jack: Not so little neither, thank you.

Lucy: The Nursery Rhyme Kids, he called us, made sure the whole office joined in the joke. Had to work quite hard at that, because it's true – not everyone knows the old nursery rhymes. They do now. Thanks to Jack. When you're new to a place, you want to fit it in, don't you, make a good impression. Rude not to join in. But I was kind of hoping I'd left those kinds of jokes behind in primary school.

Jack: Actually my name's not really Jack. It's Jonathan, but it's been Jack since forever. So it's inevitable you get the Little Jack Horner schtick, sitting in his corner with his Christmas pud. Better than being nobody Jack Horner.

Maybe at work I should have reverted to Jonathan but it's tricky going back to a name haven't really had since you were three.

I tend to frown on too much banter in the office. A certain discipline and respect is required. But then, hey – Lucy Lockett joins us? Irresistible. Even with two ts.

Lucy: That's probably where it started. Him thinking we had something in common. A silly coincidence involving nursery rhymes is not 'something in common'. Not something that matters anyway.

(Pause)

Jack: Here's the thing. I'm the branch manager here, Lucy is strictly clerical. It's my job to see that the branch runs smoothly, and if Muzz Lockett (*emphasising the double T and the Ms*) objects to being told what to do I would suggest she should check her job description. But hey, she's still quite new to the job, so, allowances must be made. I like to think of myself as being scrupulously fair to my staff.

Lucy: This morning, I finally plucked up courage to ask Mr Horner – Jack – if he would stop calling me Lucy-Locket-lost-her-pocket and could he just say Lucy or Ms Lockett? Maybe not so smart. Not sure that being called Muzz Lockett every five minutes is much of an improvement. And he's obviously got a bit of a thing about Ms. (*Beat*) Dinosaur.

Jack: My philosophy for being an effective line manager is this. Team members are not your friends. But at the same time, one should always be friendly. Listen to their problems. Make them feel valued – but never let them forget who is the boss. At the end of the day, if I say jump, they jump. I'm always happy to discuss their concerns but that's the bottom line. Respect must go both ways, but.... (*Beat*) I like to think I live up to my own ideal. My own appraisals have been very positive so far, so there's that.

(Pause)

I was very happy to overlook the earlier incident, but this time I felt I had to put my foot down. It was a very simple request, well within her pay grade, but we're back with this Muzz Lockett business again. She will have to sharpen up. I didn't want to reprimand her in front of the whole office. I may need to have a private word.

Lucy: Am I being over-sensitive? I really don't know. You see, it's all a bit unfamiliar, this, not a world I'm used to. All a bit corporate. Sales. Customer-facing, all that. And to be honest, all a bit – well, male. I'm not the only woman of course, but we do feel a bit – outnumbered. Before, I kind of knew where I was. The school was tiny and even though I was only an admin assistant it was very friendly – it seemed, I don't know, just about people, not them and us. Maybe I should have stayed put....

So I don't know. He asked me to sort out that report, well that's no problem, but it came with the Lucy-Locket-lost-her-pocket routine again. Oh please. So all I said was could he please just call me by my name, Ms Lockett or Lucy, whichever, would do just fine. And no I didn't refuse to look at the report, I just said could he ask me using just my name? And he goes, 'Lighten up, Muzz Lockett –'

Jack: Lighten up, Muzz Lockett, we're a happy team here.

Lucy: And to crown it he adds 'Look on the bright side, it could have been Kitty Fisher –'

Jack: - the well-known tart.

Lucy: Am I being over sensitive?

(Jack gets up to make a cup of coffee. She watches him)

Jack: Would you believe it? She's made a complaint to HR? That's her right of course. But for fuck's sake.

(He drinks coffee, checks phone, takes an urgent call and moves US)

Lucy: Last Friday, I went for a drink after work with Kim, you know, the Kim who runs the service department? I have to admit we were a bit sneaky about it. She's like let's make a dash for it, shake off the boys. 'The boys' are always keen for an end of the week drink, which is quite fun but, well, gets a bit loud and – footbally, if you know what I mean. So when Kim said let's go for it I'm right there. On our way out she said something about 'school run'. Really? She hasn't got any kids but no one seemed to notice. I got the giggles, felt like we'd bunked off school or something. We found a new place, further to go but really quiet. *(Beat)* Mind you, I doubt Jack would have been there anyway. Last time Masood suggested Jack come out for a drink he said 'you kids' should run along and play, he still had work to do. I think he likes to maintain an officer-and-other-ranks mystique. A bit less of the nursery rhyme stuff might help him with that.

(Pause)

Kim, she's a really good listener. Quite a relief. She'd hear all the Lucy Lockett stuff, and all the Little Jack Horner stuff, how could she not, with Jack reciting them all over the place, but when I told her that Jack had 'reimagined' his own nursery rhyme she nearly choked on her Prosecco. How did I hear that? she asked. Well, I said, he just came over to my desk the other day and he's like, get this, you'll love this Muzzz Lockett, and off he went – *Master Jack Horner* sat in his corner eating his cherry pie - big smirk - He put in his thumb and pulled out a cherry (nudge nudge), and said what a good boy am I. Yuk. Doesn't even scan. I think she was a bit shocked. Not the best example of management technique you could think of.

(She goes to get a coffee. Jack still US, on his phone, gesticulating.)

But then she said, Kim said, I really should call him out on this. What for, I said. For his behaviour. It's bullying, harassment. Oh come on, I said, he's just a bit of a tit who thinks he's funny. Yes but this Muzzz piss-take, she said, didn't objecting to Ms go out with shoulder pads and mullets? Not exactly respectful. And that's on top of the all the nursery rhyme stuff. Anyway she twisted my arm, not that she wasn't right, but, I don't know, I was just a bit ... But I did. I went to HR. I can't believe I did that.

Jack: *(back in his seat, still texting)* Sorry, just need to.... OK. Well, I'm glad to say it all went off quite well, in the end, the HR business. Some big honcho came down from Head Office, a union rep, Ms Lockett's bezzie Kim, you know, from the service department, the whole nine yards, get in the numbers I suppose. Well it was all very amicable, we all talked about mutual respect and seeing each other's points of view, blah blah, well of course, absolutely, goes without saying, Although apparently someone thought it did need saying.

(Pause)

To be honest, the whole thing, the complaint thing, took me a bit by surprise – frankly. Could I not see, the big honcho kept asking, could I not see that repeating the same joke over and over, at someone else's expense, could be seen as a form of bullying? Well I suppose, if you put it that way. But – in the end, it's still just a joke. But in the interest of good staff relations I agreed, and yes, I'm very sorry if I have caused any upset, I'll be a good boy. But the big honcho still wasn't done. And another thing, he said, why didn't you just use first names? You use first names for most of your staff, don't you Mr Horner? Well yes, that's true I admit, but this is a fairly new member of staff and I thought, a bit of respect, maybe. But apparently – *apparently*, it was the *way* I've been saying it. Too many Zs apparently. The thing is though, if I'm absolutely honest, I really really don't get the whole Ms thing. Is that

how you say it? I honestly don't know how to say it. It's not even a word. We've got along fine with Mrs and Miss for eons so why change it? I was sort of trying to explain this when Kim jumps in. Does everyone demand to know your marital status every time they ask for your name? Well I wasn't going to argue, best to try to smooth things over for the sake of staff morale. First names it is then. And I'm very sorry *Lucy* if I have inadvertently caused you any distress. End of. *(Beat)* I must remember not to refer to first names as Christian names. Don't want another slap on the wrist.

He picks up his own and Lucy's coffee cups – they do not acknowledge each other, and puts them in a bin with a recycling logo.

Mind you, I have scored a brownie point with the PC brigade. Got behind the campaign to persuade Head Office to find a supplier who will take back the cups and recycle them – right across the whole chain. Squeaky clean green boss, that's me.

(Pause)

Lucy: I had my half yearly appraisal last week. With Jack of course. I think it went OK. I've passed my probation anyway.

Jack: It was Lucy's half yearly appraisal last week. I think it went well. She's doing fine. I think I was very fair.

Lucy: He did say, however, that some of my colleagues find me a bit – prickly.

Jack: However, I did feel obliged to point out that - some people, some of her colleagues – had found her to be a bit – prickly. Only fair to mention it, as it had been raised.

Lucy: That was the word he used. Prickly. Well I suppose, if I'm honest, he may have a point. I'm still not really used to all this. It's not really me. It's like all the women have to look like they shop at Next, and there's too many men in tight suits and hair gel, except for the mechanics of course – but they don't count and that's another thing. And Jack's not the only one who likes jokes. Is it a man thing? Why can't they just chat instead of playing joke ping pong all the time. Taking it in turns. Here, have you heard this one, you'll really like this one. Well no I probably won't but you try to laugh along anyway. John and Roger are the worst. Any slack moment in the day and they're off. Here, you'll love this one. *(Beat)* So yes. Maybe I do get a bit prickly.

(Pause)

I was having a bit of a moan to Kim about all this, oh and by the way Tanya has taken to coming with us as well, of a Friday, she's great too. Best part of the week to be honest, Friday afternoon, and she said, Kim said, why did I take the job then? You had a job, you weren't made redundant or anything. So I explained about my mother. She'd become unwell and needed help, you see, and Sally – that's my sister - couldn't really do it, not with her high-powered job and an LK Bennett life-style to maintain And she's miles away and there's the two kids in school. So she couldn't be expected to up sticks and move. So I moved. Not much choice really. But to be fair, Sally did help. A lot, in fact. She got me the deposit on my flat here, and the pay's better here than my old job, so really I can't complain. I'll work on the prickliness, promise.

Jack: So that's appraisals out of the way for now. Everyone hates them of course, grumbles about box-ticking, but I don't know. Things get said that might not otherwise get said, although

most people just go along with it without a great deal of thought. Lucy, though, Lucy said there was something she wanted to raise. Said she felt I was “on her case” the whole time. Well not the whole time, she said, but compared with other members of staff. Was I checking up on her? Was she doing something wrong? I was a bit taken aback to be honest. But then she is still the newest member of the team so it seems not unreasonable to be...

(Pause)

My own appraisal's coming up soon.

Lucy: Tanya and Kim have ganged up on me. Friday evening in the pub they bought a whole bottle of Prosecco so I knew something was up. They reckon I need a man and they're up for helping me find one. Or woman. That was Tanya's contribution. Man, for preference. I said. So why was I single? Good question. And Tanya's like, you're too gorgeous to be single. Bit of a twinkle there. I had wondered. Sorry to disappoint her.

(Pause)

Jack: I'm thinking of asking Lucy out. For a date.

(Pause)

Lucy: I don't know why I'm single. If I knew that I probably wouldn't be. I just don't seem to have – stickability. Men to me, I mean. It might start off all bells and whistles and then suddenly, they're gone. There's a bit of it's not you it's me, I really like you, I just need some space etc and that's it. So obviously it is me. Kim and Tanya both waded in. All nonsense, I just didn't believe in myself. Easy for them to say. And then didn't I know that several of the guys at work fancy me? Really? Yes really, apparently. Kim said she'd be jealous if she wasn't my friend as she'd had her eye on Masood for some time but she reckons he's more interested in me. Well, this was all news to me. Masood? Hadn't I noticed? Well of course I'd noticed. And then there's Jack, said Tanya. There's Jack what? Jack fancies you as well, Tanya reckons. She has a nose for this kind of thing she says. Jack? Are you kidding? My god. Actually, to tell the truth, he's been creeping me out a bit lately. Always checking up on me it seems. He seems to be passing my desk more often than strictly necessary. Hi Lucy, how's it going Lucy? Anything I can help you with Lucy? That's creepy too, using my name a lot like that. Ever since the Lucy Locket business. I did manage to bring it up with him during the appraisal which I thought was brave of me but he just said it was just a concerned line manager looking out for his most junior team member. Like I was some fresh out of college intern. It's been nearly a year. *(Beat)* Kim says I should take positive action. Ask one of them out. One of them? Masood or Jack – it would spike Jack's guns for him if you did that. Why on earth would I want to do that? *(Beat)* Masood, on the other hand... *(Beat)* I need coffee.

(She goes to the coffee machine. Jack joins her. They are now in the same time/space)

Jack: Here, let me help you with that.

Lucy: I've got it, it's fine, thanks.

Jack: So, Lucy, how's it going? Everything alright?

Lucy: Yes, fine, thanks.

Jack: In general, not just work? Everything good?

Lucy: Yes, yes, all fine, thank you.

Jack: *(Getting his own coffee)* The thing is, you see, Lucy, I was thinking...

Lucy: Thinking?

Jack: That you and I should go for a drink sometime. Or a meal.

Lucy: Really?

Jack: Yes, really.

Lucy: Why?

Jack: I think we should. It would be fun.

Lucy: Are you asking me out?

Jack: Yes.

Lucy: On a date?

Jack: Yes. What do you say?

Lucy: Well it's sweet of you, but –

Jack: Oh come on, it'll be fun.

Lucy: I, um – no, I don't think so.

Jack: Why not?

Lucy: It's just not –

Jack: Appropriate? Oh surely we can forget about all that manager/employee stuff after hours –

Lucy: It's not that. It's just –

Jack: So what is it?

Lucy: It's just – no. Thank you, but no.

Jack: Are you seeing someone else?

Lucy: No. Not that it's anything to –.

Jack: - then I don't see –

Lucy: Jack, seriously, no. Just – no. Excuse me, I have work to do.

(She exits. Jack addresses audience)

Jack: Well. That was a bit of a slap in the face I don't mind admitting. I wasn't quite expecting that. What's her problem I wonder.

(Lucy enters and returns to her chair, unaware of Jack. He watches her closely as she sits, then exits.)

Lucy: The other day, he asked me out. On an actual date. I wasn't expecting that. Should I have been flattered? It didn't feel that way, felt more like an order than an invitation to be

honest. And a foregone conclusion that I would say yes. Why on earth would he assume that?

Still we had a good laugh about it, Kim and Tanya and me. Thank Christ for that end of week drink, a real life saver. None of us has family or anything to rush home to, there's Mum of course but I'm there over the weekend anyway so Friday's all ours. Don't suppose it'll last but for now.... It's not that work is boring. Not as such. Just – not exciting. Invoices, mostly. Sales reports. I shouldn't grumble. Pay's decent, a proper salary, an actual contract. The offices are – nice, if you like chrome and plastic and glass. I even get my own desk. All so clean and shiny it makes my teeth ache. Brings on a longing for flip flops and organic cotton. I expect we're all like that – home time and off comes the corporate shiny skin – 'thank you for holding your call is impor –' FUCK THAT! And out come the biker leathers or whatever it is that people are into. I know we're like that, as soon as we're at that pub table shoes off, jackets, off and we all get, well a bit filthy. And no phones. Phones strictly banned. There must be exceptions of course. Jack I expect. Can't imagine him dressing down. He's the sort that sends work emails when he's off sick. Kim thinks he's a bit creepy.

Mind you I did hear a funny thing about him the other day. I know, you shouldn't listen to office gossip but really.... Apparently he's afraid of clowns. Properly afraid, full-on phobia. There's even a name for it, I googled it. Coulrophobia. Jack has coulrophobia. Anyway what happened apparently was he and Roger were on the way to the pub and they passed one in the street – a clown that is, just a random clown walking along. Well Jack freaked, seriously freaked. Then tried to laugh it off, then swore Roger to secrecy. Well even I know that swearing Roger to secrecy is about as effective as posting on the intranet. So now everyone knows. It's not funny though. A bit sad. Makes him almost human.

(Jack returns. They are in separate spaces.)

Jack: I'm pleased to say my appraisal went well. Very well. The branch runs like clockwork, sales figures compare very favourably, given the context. Customer satisfaction ratings good. No complaints from staff. Although that 'Lucy Locket' business from last year did come up. Inevitable I suppose. Had I "learnt my lesson" from that? They said. "Appropriate behaviour with subordinate members of staff". Well of course. Although I'm not sure I needed a "lesson". Yes I can tell the difference between a joke and a chat-up line. Although it seems that some people can't.

(Pause)

Anyway, we're all adults here. There's no rule about relationships between staff members. Discretion at work of course, goes without saying, but in our own time? We're free agents. And if a colleague is an attractive woman and a colleague wants to ask that woman out, even if he is her boss, he should of course be free to do so. *(Beat)* Which is what I said, more or less, to Lorraine, when I asked her out. She tells me she's thinking about it.

Lucy: It is a good job, of course it is. But not forever. I fear I'll turn into a polyester blob with a fixed grin. *(Beat)* I need more skills, or more something. I know how to manage a spreadsheet, write an email with correct English and no emojis, talk the talk with customers. I really do need to start looking around. Animals. Kids. Sick people. Anything with a pulse.

(Pause)

And talking of something with a pulse.... Masood asked me out. And I went. And it was – great.

(Pause)

To be honest, I wasn't sure what to say at first, knowing how much Kim likes him. In fact I did actually ask her what she thought. And bless her she was a real pal about it. After all, she said, it was you he asked not me so good luck to you. But I try not to say too much about it around her as she really does like him. And I have to say she's got good taste. He can shed the corporate shine in a nanosecond and suddenly it's scented candles, artisan bread and – futons. As I say, best not to say too much about it.

(Pause)

Jack: I felt obliged, the other day, to have a quiet word with young Lucy.

(To Lucy directly) Ms Lockett. Might I have a word? Oh sorry – Lucy. My office?

(She crosses to him and stands as if in front of a desk)

I have to say, Lucy - oh do please take a seat, no need to stand around like that.

(She fetches her chair and places it near his, angled.)

I have to say, I am a little disappointed. I thought you understood about appropriate behaviour in the workplace.

Lucy: I'm sorry?

Jack: You were seen, the other day. With Masood. Kissing.

Lucy: In front of customers, was it?

Jack: Well no. In the staffroom.

Lucy: At lunchtime.

Jack: I expect so.

Lucy: It was so. Because you see, Jack, I do know about appropriate behaviour in the workplace which is why that I know that kissing one's boyfriend –

Jack: Boyfriend?

Lucy: - kissing one's boyfriend in front of customers would be very wrong. But when it's lunchtime and one's boyfriend has just given one a birthday present, I'd say a thankyou kiss would be entirely appropriate, wouldn't you? And as that has only happened once – the kiss, I mean – that must have been when we were 'seen'. Who saw us, by the way?

Jack: *(Beat)* I did.

Lucy: We didn't see you.

Jack: You were obviously busy.

Lucy: Not that 'busy'. There was no one else in the room so where were you?

Jack: Well I –

Lucy: Please don't tell me there's a camera.

Jack: No of course not.

Lucy: So what, peering through a crack in the door? Why didn't you come in and say something at the time, if you thought it so 'inappropriate'?

Jack: I just want us to be clear that personal relations should be kept to your own time.

Lucy: Lunchtime is my own time, so we are agreed. You've been very clear, thank you.

Jack: Good.

Lucy: Was there anything else?

Jack: No. That will be all, thank you. Just so we're clear.

(She picks up her chair, he goes to help her with it.)

Lucy: I can manage, thank you.

(She returns to her own space. He straightens his chair. Separate time/space)

Well Well. Lucy Lockett, you seem to have grown a pair. Maybe not the right expression but still. I'm proud of me. Kim and Tanya will be proud of me. The cheek of the man. He must have been spying on us. Anyway, he's been told. Wait till I tell Masood.

Jack: I take pride in maintaining – discipline, throughout the staff here. And I think I can safely say I have succeeded. Standards of behaviour, language, dress, are excellent. It's been commented on, which is why I felt that a more – formal – word would be the best approach with Lucy on this occasion. I mean her suggestion that I should have gone barging in to break them up... well really. What was she thinking?

(Pause)

I should have been firmer. Should I have been firmer? I don't want her getting the idea that she can just walk away from me like that.

(Pause)

Her and Masood? No. Surely not.

(Pause)

Maybe I should have a word with him as well. He does have a bit of a history of answering back. I don't want him putting ideas in her head.

(Pause)

I get it, of course I do. I get it that things have changed. I'm not such an old fogey that I can't see that change and progress are welcome of course but you don't have to go with every new fad that comes along. And yes, I admit it, I like the old fashioned ways, our parents' generation was right about a lot of things. Like courtesy. And modesty. You see, those are things that to me really matter, but my generation seems to have abandoned them in favour of "being yourself". But will someone explain to me please how is it not "being yourself" to open a door for a woman or carry her chair? Or for that matter expecting her to come to work dressed for work and not for the beach? With – everything – on display? And then they

have the nerve to complain about “unwanted attention”. And deference, that’s another thing, they say the age of deference is over, and we’re supposed to celebrate the fact, but isn’t deference just another word for respect? Where are the boundaries now? So yes, I have to admit I find it all a bit – disturbing. I’m told I don’t get it, I’m out of my time, I’m “on the wrong page”. Well maybe it’s the times that are at fault, maybe we’ve turned too many pages.

(Pause)

Maybe she – Lucy – had a point. I could have just been discreet, asked them to, well, stop. I don’t know. But at the end of the day a bit of formality never hurts.

(Pause)

Lorraine declined my offer of a date, by the way.

(Pause)

I might sound out Head Office on the subject of cameras.

(Pause)

Now if you’d excuse me, I have some important calls to make.

(He exits, but this time cutting close to Lucy’s chair. She flinches.)

Lucy: They all said some nice things about my little run in over ‘kissgate’. Masood’s taking to joining us – Tanya said she was delighted to have him as an honorary woman. And he took that as a compliment which was good of him. I have to say my life is on a bit of an up at the moment. There’s Masood of course – early days, but we’re – happy, and I have friends and I like my flat, and Mum’s doing better. I’m beginning to feel at home here. Work’s work of course but there’s nothing positively wrong about it. Except possibly my boss. Tanya had us all round to hers the other weekend for a meal. Actually we just called out for pizza but it was great. Just – relaxed. I think I was a bit scared of Tanya at first – I just thought, you know, gay, full-on feminist, tricky – and not even sure whether you’re to say Tanya or Tarnya, got the feeling that one of them would have got me into trouble. I couldn’t’ve been more wrong. Heart of gold. And it’s Tanya. As in Fan. Says she’s ‘between girlfriends’ at the moment. I hope she finds someone. She deserves the best. *(Beat)* They’re all concerned about me. Which is sweet. Concerned about Jack, the way he’s been behaving. I’m sure it’s nothing. I didn’t say that he’d sent me a Friends request. I declined, and closed my account. I hate it anyway. So. I don’t know.

(Jack returns to his own space)

Jack: My suggestion of installing cameras in the staffroom didn’t go down too well with Head Office. I got a bit of a lecture in fact. “This isn’t a warehouse, our people are professionals and deserve to be treated as such. Trust is a better route to high standards of compliance than surveillance.” Well of course but what I was thinking was yes, trust – and verify. But no, not having it, no cameras, end of. Except in the customer areas of course. So you think you’re making a constructive suggestion to improve workplace efficiency and what you get back is an earful. Hardly fair. Oh and they added that I might want to “lighten up” at work. Just a friendly suggestion. No idea what that’s supposed to be about.

Although I do need to consider my work-life balance. I take my job very seriously, I give it everything. I trust they're aware of that, upstairs. But perhaps, if I'm honest, my social life may be suffering as a result. I enjoy my five-a-side, and the guys from the gym are great, we have a laugh down the pub afterwards, but still.

(Pause)

And, here's a thing. Roger and John gave me a surprise birthday – treat. Surprise. They arrived at my office door at lunchtime, dressed as clowns. Proper clowns, red nose, white face, the lot. Dragged me practically to the staffroom and there was a cake, red and white, stumpy candle in the middle. They sang happy birthday. It was thoughtful of them, but... Awkward. Clowns are – not my favourite thing. I think I might have mentioned that, before, to someone. Anyway. Nice of them, I suppose. *(Beat)* A woman in my life would be quite welcome.

(Pause)

I remain convinced that Lucy Lockett and I would be very well suited. We have much in common. It's a shame that she doesn't appear to agree.

(Pause)

However, work responsibilities come first. *(He addresses Lucy directly)* Lucy, could you spare a moment? My office?

(She joins him)

Lucy: Yes?

Jack: I hope you don't mind me mentioning it, but the fact is that you were late this morning.

Lucy: No I don't mind. I was ten minutes late this morning. Is that worth mentioning?

Jack: Yes I'm afraid it is.

Lucy: I was ten minutes late this morning because there was an accident on the by-pass.

Jack: One should always leave enough time to allow for the unexpected.

Lucy: Which is why I'm normally early.

Jack: Which has been noted.

Lucy: So, sorry, I'm not really sure what we're talking about here.

Jack: The fact that you were late this morning.

Lucy: Well we're agreed about that. There was an accident on the by-pass. Looked quite serious.

(Pause)

Jack: Well it mustn't happen again.

Lucy: It wasn't deliberate.

Jack: And you'll make up the time?

Lucy: Ten minutes?

Jack: Yes.

Lucy: Fine. Tomorrow I'll probably be in a bit early. As usual. Barring accidents. Will that do?

Jack: Yes. Providing notice has been taken.

Lucy: Yes. Notice has been taken. Will that be all?

Jack: Yes. Thank you.

(They return to their own space/time)

Lucy: Jesus frigging Christ . The man is becoming impossible.

Jack: Frankly I didn't expect Lucy to be the type to be difficult she needs to accept that small infringements lead to larger ones. I will not have liberties...

Lucy: Still it gave us a good laugh over our drinks. I made a point of staying a full forty five minutes after closing and of course he couldn't leave until I did. I could see him hunched over his computer trying to look busy. Solitaire probably, or whatever geeky thing he's into. Tanya reckons it's a mistake to wind him up. She doesn't trust him. Shame it's so easy, winding him up that is, and me normally the timid one.

Jack: I will not have my authority challenged.

Lucy: Masood and I are going way for the weekend. A small gastro-pub with rooms somewhere in the Downs. I can't wait.

Jack: *(moving to join her)* Lucy, a bit of a favour if you don't mind. There's a report I'd like you to look over before you leave if that's alright.

Lucy: Well I do need to leave promptly this evening. I'm going away for the weekend. Not that that's something that management needs to know.

Jack: Who with?

Lucy: That is definitely none of your business.

Jack: Well I do need that report checking.

Lucy: If I can do it in time then of course I will. Otherwise it will have to wait for Monday morning.

Jack: I don't like –

Lucy: It's not reasonable to hand me new work this late on a Friday afternoon. But I'll do what I can, and definitely finish it first thing Monday. That's fair enough, surely. I really do need to get away on time.

(Pause)

Jack: I'll tell you what. If you finish it all now I'll take you out for a drink, as a reward.

Lucy: Reward?

Jack: Yes. By way of saying thank you.

Lucy: I don't mean to be rude, but I'm not sure I see going for a drink with you as rewarding.

Jack: I'm just trying to be – friendly.

Lucy: I'm sure, but it's more like – awkward. *(Beat)* And if that report really is important I'd better make a start on it, hadn't I? And as I thought I'd explained, I really do need to get away promptly.

Jack: Fine. I hope you enjoy your weekend.

Lucy: I will, thank you.

(He exits)

And we did. So pleased to be away, from work, from creepy Jack Horner in his corner. Away from the city stench. You forget how bad it is, and all the constant noise, until you're away from it. It was one of those rare weekends of unbroken sunshine and the hotel only had three bedrooms and it had a lovely garden with tables in the shade and the food was delicious and there were walks all round. I'd forgotten what it's like, sunlight through woodland trees and the scent of leaves and grass and – well, it was all lovely. Masood is lovely. Maybe...

Coming back to work was a shock.

(Jack enters and comes up close behind her chair)

Jack: And how is my best team member this morning? Good weekend was it?

Lucy: Yes thank you.

Jack: With Masood, was it?

Lucy: Like I said –

Jack: Oh yes, sorry, none of my business. And no hard feeling about that business with the report on Friday?

Lucy: No. It's fine. Jack –

Jack: You're right, it was unreasonable. I'll make it up to you.

(He puts both hands on her shoulders, standing close behind, leaning in)

Lucy: Jack, do you mind –

Jack: Just trying –

Lucy: Look, do you mind –

Jack: You're very tense -

Lucy: That's – look, just get off me will you!

(She stands and pulls away)

Sod you!

(Jack steps away a bit, hands up. She stares at him in disbelief and walks off)

Jack: Charming. What did I do?

(She returns, they exchange a look, then return to their own space/time. She paces)

Lucy: What do I do? What do I do now? I'm beginning to dread coming to work. One minute he's being the insufferable boss the next he's asking me out. And the 'incident'. I felt a fool just describing it. Might have been easier to say nothing. "He put his hands on my shoulders. Stood really close behind me so, you know..." is that such a big deal? Kim was for ignoring it, Tanya all for reporting it. I didn't tell Mum of course. Masood threatened to punch his lights out. Sweet but not helpful. Anyway he's not the punching sort. So, report it? Who to? Hardly a crime surely? But it's not right. He can't just... The odd thing is, I can't really see him as – predatory, some sort of predator. It's more like he genuinely believes that's what being nice is all about. On the other hand, I think he's been gossiping about me. It's all over Facebook apparently. I wouldn't know, I hate the thing, but the others – keep me informed. So much for management standards. I've been getting weird looks from some of the guys. Like I'm the office pariah or something. No. it's not right.

Jack: Some people need to lighten up. Ask the guys, they'll tell you. Some people, well OK, her, Lucy, needs to lighten up. So stuck up. "None of your business". And that little gang of hers, Tonya, Tanya, whatever and that one from Servicing. Her little coven, tight as fuck. I want a happy working environment, and a little bit of banter, a bit of flirtation, is part of that. Surely.

Lucy: We were heading off out to the pub last Friday, Roger and John had their heads together over their phones. little smirks and I'm sure I heard the word coven.

Well it's done. I've reported him to HR. Phew. Wasn't easy. The 'coven', bless'em, really helped. Tanya was spitting nails, it's harassment, pure and simple, text book, google it. Unwanted touching. Not to mention unreasonable work demands with bribery. Text book, she kept saying. Classic. But then Kim goes but what if he makes your life even more difficult once he knows what you've done? He could get you sacked. And Tanya – report him again. Yet I'm wondering do I need the hassle? I'd feel a bit of a fool. Isn't it just a bit whiny? And then there's those ancestral voices whispering slut, you must have done something to encourage him. Well they can shut up for starters. And yet and yet. Why don't I just take him aside and give him both barrels and threaten to report him if he does it again? Kim likes that one but Tanya's not having it. I shouldn't have to be the tough one, she says. He may very well back off from you but then go looking for a softer touch and where does that get any of us? Fair point. So. Email written – dates, times, description, potential witnesses. Sleepless night. Done.

Jack: Would you fucking believe it – she's reported me to HR. For "harassment".

Lucy: Not sure what happens next.

Jack: "Suspended with immediate effect pending a full enquiry." Bitch.

Lucy: Suspended with immediate effect, pending a full enquiry. What have I done?

(He stands, glares at her and exits)

Little Jack Horner, alone in a corner... I can't help feeling sorry for him, I don't think he's a bad person. Not really.

(Pause)

So. Due process happened. Meetings, reports, more meetings. Horrible. Anyway the upshot is he will be reinstated providing he makes a full apology and commits to a training course. There's one all lined up for him. "Behaviour at work – understanding the unacceptable." Afterwards apparently you have to complete a multi-choice questionnaire. Pass or Fail. A course "designed to ensure maximum user engagement."

So he did all that, ticked all the right boxes so it seems. And back he comes. Seems to have got the message, moved on. As far as anyone can tell. Although I've moved on as well.

(Jack enters. His manner has changed. He goes to Lucy and holds out a hand. After a moment she takes it. A brief shake)

Jack: You were entirely in the right. I am sorry.

Lucy: Well it's done now. Welcome back.

Jack: Thank you. Things are going to be different from now on. I trust we will have a very different working relationship going forward.

Lucy: That's good. The only thing is, I won't be here to enjoy it. I'm leaving. Sent my resignation in yesterday.

Jack: Oh. I'm sorry to hear that. It wasn't –

Lucy: No. I've been thinking about it for some time. I'm going to train as a teacher. One of those train-while-you-earn schemes.

Jack: Oh. Well. Good for you. I'm sure you'll be very good at it.

Lucy: Actually I'm terrified.

Jack: I'm sure there's no need for that.

Lucy: Dozens of little monsters all at once... And - I'm getting married.

Jack: Oh. That's... Masood? Not that it's any of my business.

Lucy: Masood, yes.

Jack: Well – congratulations! Lucky Masood.

Lucy: Lucky me. *(Beat)*

Jack: *(Beat)* His family are, you know – happy, with –

Lucy: Of course. They're delighted. *(Beat)* They're from Willesden.

Jack: Right. And what will we be calling you, once you're married?

Lucy: Well nothing. I won't be – Oh I see. I'm keeping my name. I'm Lucy Lockett. *(Beat)* Well, time to go.

Jack: Look, I really am sorry, that I put you through all that.

Lucy: It's OK. Really. It's in the past. Moving on.

Jack: Moving on.

(She offers a hand, he accepts for a brief shake, she exits)

Jack: *(Sits)* Little Jack Horner sat in his corner... eating...
... and said, what a good boy am I.