

THE CONSULTANT

1.01

"Idle Hands"

Written by

Tony Basgallop
October 2020

Based on "The Consultant" by Bentley Little

EXT. TOY DISTRICT, DOWNTOWN L.A - DAY

Pedestrians and traffic drift past a converted warehouse in Downtown's toy district. This used to be considered a slum, but architectural engineering and gentrification have given it a new breath of life. Brick and steel and glass and wood, blended. Generations building upon one another.

INT. LOBBY / RECEPTION. COMPWARE - DAY

Behind the glass facade--

HALF A DOZEN 10 YEAR OLDS are sitting on leather couches in the reception lobby of a high-tech computer games studio. Color matching backpacks and labelled names on their polo shirts. "Matilda" and "Evan" and "Spirit" and "Tokyo", etc.

They're looking in awe at the gigantic screens that dominate the lobby walls, demoing their favorite apps.

Fruit getting sliced.

Colored shapes matching in 3s.

Mazes being negotiated.

The sort of time-wasting, shit-taking, puzzle-solving apps we clutter our devices with.

Beneath these screens, a recreation corner. A ping pong table and vintage arcade machines. A carnival "test your strength" hammer and bell, and a hut that serves fresh coffee - all day. There's even a cage of parakeets somewhere in the mix.

This generation wanted to be Willy Wonka.

Behind all the toys and distractions, deeper into the office space, a BANK OF CODERS are hard at work, writing these games.

ELAINE HAYMAN descends a glass staircase and approaches the Children in reception. 28 years old and a perky smile.

ELAINE

Well good morning, everybody. My name is Elaine and it's my pleasure today to show you what we do here at CompWare. So why don't y'all come on back.

INT. CODING BAY - DAY

"Cavernous" would best describe this work space. High ceilings and little in the way of natural light. Screens fizzing in every direction. Hard to know if the inhabitants are working hard or hanging out. There don't seem to be any rules.

Elaine is leading the precession of Children through the back offices, lacing through the desks and outstretched legs of Coders.

ELAINE

Now can anybody tell me what a coder does?

Every Child raises a hand to answer.

As Elaine passes a desk, she looks towards CRAIG HORNE (32), his feet up on the desk, ordering lunch on his tablet. Craig runs this department with a soft fist.

ELAINE (CONT'D)

(for Craig's ears)

Because I seriously don't know, some days.

Craig takes the dig in good humor. He scratches his head and discreetly flashes Elaine the bird as she passes.

The most precocious of the Children speaks up--

TOKYO

Coders write the games.

ELAINE

That's correct. Coders write the games. But they don't *create* the games. For that, we rely on one person. Would you like to meet him?

THE GLASS STAIRCASE --

Elaine is leading the precession of Children up an elaborate glass staircase, connecting the first floor workhouse to a mezzanine level filled with managerial offices.

ELAINE (CONT'D)

Sang-woo was just thirteen years of age when he published his first game, made in his tiny bedroom in Busan, South Korea. Can anybody tell me the name of that game?

TOKYO
"Fuck Dragons".

ELAINE
Actually F-Dragons was a later release. His first game was "Skittle Dolly", which to date has garnered over thirty-seven million downloads. Seven years later Sang has over 100 original games on the market, with hundreds more in development.

INT. MANAGERIAL SUITE. MEZZANINE - DAY

Elaine leads the Children past a suite of offices, where Managers are working behind glass partitions. Even when you ascend, there's no place to hide at CompWare.

ELAINE
Obviously Sang is a very busy man, but I know he'd just love to say hello to y'all.

Elaine stops outside the biggest and best glass partitioned office. The blinds are closed, affording the boss privacy.

ELAINE (CONT'D)
And maybe if you ask him nicely, he'll let you play a demo of an exciting new game we've been working on.

The Children BEAM at this promise.

ELAINE (CONT'D)
Just give me one second.

Elaine knocks softly on the office door. She opens it a crack and folds her head inside. We don't get to see what she sees.

ELAINE (CONT'D)
The children from Glendale Middle are here to see you...

Elaine gets the all clear, opens the office door fully, and herds the children inside.

ELAINE (CONT'D)
Here we all go... Don't be shy, he won't bite...

As the last of the Children enter the office, Elaine remains outside and pulls the door shut behind them.

She walks away and settles at her own glass workspace nearby. She takes a natural breath and abandons the breezy school-teacher manners.

Craig approaches from the stairs, heading towards Sang's office. As he goes to pass Elaine's station, she reaches out a hand and places it on his chest, stopping him.

ELAINE (CONT'D)

He has small people in with him.

CRAIG

How long are they going to be?

Only now does her hand leave his chest.

ELAINE

If he needs his ego stroked, thirty minutes. If not, they'll be out in three. What do you need?

CRAIG

I had an idea I wanted to run by him.

ELAINE

You know how that tends to go...

CRAIG

Ah, but this time I took your advice. I'm going to make him think it's *his* idea.

ELAINE

That wasn't my advice. And it's not healthy to hate your boss to this degree.

CRAIG

I don't hate him. I just happen to think there's a strong possibility that he's evil incarnate.

ELAINE

Sang can sometimes be conceited. Vain. Narcissistic. But he's not a bad person.

GUNSHOTS ring out from behind the closed blinds of the boss's office.

BANG BANG BANG.

Everything slows. Employees duck for cover or run for the stairs. Screaming. Panic spreading.

BANG BANG BANG.

An entire clip emptied in that small glass box. The closed blinds dancing a jig from the explosive force.

Elaine charges towards the office door, her only instinct to save the children.

Craig sees her intentions and runs after her - to protect her?

INT. SANG'S OFFICE - DAY

The door bursts open and Elaine enters, with Craig close behind her. Through the smoky discharge they see--

5 of the Children, cowered in the corner of the office. Alive and unhurt. They look towards the desk and see--

Sang-woo (20), slumped in his seat, peppered with bullet holes. Stone cold dead. Finally their gaze settles on--

Tokyo, the 10 year old boy. A spent handgun in his fist, still aimed at the corpse.

The boy turns and looks at Craig and Elaine. As if only just realizing what he's done, he croaks--

TOKYO
I want my mommy.

FADE OUT.

INT. CRAIG'S BEDROOM. DOWNTOWN - NIGHT - 2 WEEKS LATER

FADING IN--

Craig awakes in bed from a restless sleep. The lights of Downtown L.A at his small apartment window. It's a paycheck to paycheck, yet comfortable, living.

As Craig rises out of bed, his girlfriend on the next pillow, PATTY (30s), stirs but doesn't wake.

INT. CRAIG'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Craig's on the sofa, playing "Call of Duty" on the console. On the TV screen he's a gun wielding soldier. A good guy, taking out the enemy.

There's a laptop on a desk across the room, so we move towards that.

ON THE LAPTOP SCREEN --

A news article. An innocent picture of the 10 year old shooter, Tokyo. A headline that declares "THE DEVIL MADE HIM DO IT".

EXT. CRAIG'S APARTMENT BUILDING. - DAY

A two-tiered apartment building with a shared, gated pool. Empty, discarded shorts floating on the water.

Craig descends from the top tier, in sweats. He pops a couple of plastic pods into his ears as he begins to jog away.

EXT. VARIOUS STREETS. DOWNTOWN L.A - NIGHT

Craig's jogging the streets. In his ears, the plastic pods play MALE VOICES, narrating the city streets with live streaming of a COD game. Multiple VOICES, discussing tactics and strategy in combat.

"Come up from behind".

"Look right, look right."

"Is anyone going to waste this motherfucker?"

"Base is secure."

With this paranoid rhetoric in his ears, Craig jogs past the homeless camps and the cleaning trucks with hungry brushes. A threat seemingly round every corner.

Until he exhausts himself from the run and takes a breath outside of--

EXT. OUTSIDE CONVERTED WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

His place of work. The scene of crime. The nerve center of his nightmares.

Graffiti artists have tagged the front of the building with messages of respect for a fallen member of the zeitgeist. Iconic little emoji characters that featured in his games: exploding fruit; a doll head on a skittle body. And probably the most poignant message of all:

"GAME OVER".

Craig reflects on the artwork before noticing--

A SINGLE LIGHT burning inside the offices. Someone's in there. So Craig removes his plastic pods and walks towards the entrance. He pushes on the door--

It swings open for him.

INT. LOBBY / GROUND FLOOR - NIGHT

An empty parakeet cage hanging in the lobby. Blank screens and cold, congealed coffee cups. No one's been here for a week or two. Since the incident.

Craig enters from the street and takes it all in.

CRAIG
(calling)
Hello...?

No answer. So he walks towards the light shining from the back of the coding bay.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM. CODING BAY - NIGHT

Elaine is inside the all glass conference room. She's standing on top of the conference table, dismantling a smoke detector casing on the ceiling. A little unsteady on her feet because she's been out drinking.

As the casing comes away, she removes a miniature camera device.

CRAIG
(o/s)
What are you doing?

Elaine turns with a start, to see Craig standing in the doorway.

ELAINE
Fuck, Craig. You almost gave me a heart attack.

Elaine puts the camera device into her clutch bag, clambers off the table.

CRAIG
What is that?

ELAINE
What?

CRAIG
What you just took out of--
(realizing)
Is that a camera?

ELAINE
What? You're paranoid.

CRAIG
Show it to me.

ELAINE
OK, it's a camera.

CRAIG
What the fuck? You were filming in here?

ELAINE
It was Sang's idea. Ever since the lawsuit - he was paranoid.

CRAIG
Where else?
(firmer)
Where else are there cameras?

Elaine reaches into her clutch bag and pulls out a handful of 5 dismantled camera devices.

ELAINE
I just got started.

Craig walks out in disgust.

INT. CODING BAY. CRAIG'S DESK - NIGHT

Craig walks towards his desk as Elaine follows him.

ELAINE
What are you doing here?

CRAIG

I couldn't sleep and I thought I
might have left some weed behind.

Craig opens his desk drawer and stares in at the useless
clutter and novelty stress toys. He gathers up a small pot of
weed, shakes the crumbs in the light.

CRAIG (CONT'D)

Huzzah.

Craig sits at his desk and loads a tiny pipe.

ELAINE

Wanna share that? I could do with a
few zees.

She sits on the corner of his desk.

CRAIG

Found something else yet?

ELAINE

Looks like I'm going to E-Five.
They're putting together an offer.
You?

CRAIG

I'm taking some time. Hell, they're
still paying my contract.

ELAINE

Don't take too long. Sang's family
are putting us out for bids. I'm
still in an email chain. There are
debts to clear, they'll take
anything.

CRAIG

Maybe Mousebreaker will buy us.

ELAINE

Maybe you want to code unicorns for
the rest of your miserable life.

It all seems so hopeless. The easy, well paid, pain in the
ass job has gone. The bubble has burst.

Craig takes a hit on the pipe.

ELAINE (CONT'D)

Still seeing his face?

CRAIG

I texted you that in confidence.

He offers her the pipe and she tries to take it, but he holds onto it for an extra beat. Arms reaching out to one another, fingers almost touching.

ELAINE

What does Patty think? You guys are still--

The bond breaks and she comes away with the pipe.

CRAIG

She thinks I should pray for my soul and change my career.

ELAINE

She never said that.

CRAIG

Not in the same breath.

Elaine takes a hit on the pipe.

CRAIG (CONT'D)

If the Devil made him do it, what does that make us?

ELAINE

Cigarettes make you cough. Coke rots your teeth. TV makes you stupid. You played video games your whole life, right?

CRAIG

Of course.

ELAINE

Did you ever go on a spree kill?

CRAIG

Not yet.

Sounds of a door opening and street sounds bleeding in. Elaine and Craig turn to look towards the lobby.

ELAINE

Didn't you lock up?

Craig takes an air freshener from his drawer, spritzes the cloud of weed.

INT. LOBBY / GROUND FLOOR - NIGHT

A TAILORED MAN enters through the front door. Smarter in appearance than most people strive for these days. Every hair and nail in place. 50 years of age and still preening.

As the Man looks up the glass staircase, towards the scene of crime managerial offices above, Elaine and Craig approach from the coding bay.

ELAINE

Hello...? Can we help you?

TAILORED MAN

Mr Sang-woo, please.

Awkward.

ELAINE

Sang isn't available. Is there someone else who can--

TAILORED MAN

(remembering)

That's right, he killed those children and then turned the gun on himself.

ELAINE

I didn't get your name...

TAILORED MAN

Regus Patoff.

CRAIG

He didn't kill any children, Mr. Patoff. One of them shot him. A psychotic break caused by--

ELAINE

They don't know what caused it.

PATOFF

You're right. I told myself that other version and it sounded so incredible that it must have stuck in my mind. Isn't fiction indelible sometimes?

Patoff plants a foot on the first glass step. But it seems to take him great physical effort, as it would an old person.

PATOFF (CONT'D)

Do you mind?

Patoff holds out an arm for support.

PATOFF (CONT'D)

I'm not very good on stairs.

Craig supports Patoff under one shoulder, helps him up the first few steps. Patoff moves like a man who weighs 10 times his appearance. It's disconcerting to see someone so vulnerable on something as ubiquitous as stairs.

Elaine's having none of it.

ELAINE

I'm sorry, could I just ask-- where the fuck do you think you're going?

PATOFF

To work. I trust Mr. Sang was good to his word and made appropriate arrangements. My contract doesn't officially start until the morning, but I'm so excited I just couldn't wait.

Elaine follows as Craig assists Patoff slowly up more steps.

ELAINE

What did Sang hire you to do, Mr...?

CRAIG

Patoff. Did I say that right?

PATOFF

I am to consult with Mr. Sang on all matters of business.

ELAINE

Specifically? Corporate structure? Productivity? Branding?

PATOFF

All matters of business.

Patoff takes a breather, halfway up the glass staircase. This is exhausting for both him and Craig. As Patoff looks down the stairs they've climbed, he feels quite giddy.

PATOFF (CONT'D)

It's higher than it looks from down there.

CRAIG

We have a service elevator. But we are sorta half way up.

PATOFF

Then logic dictates we proceed.

Patoff plants his foot on the next step, determined to scale this mountain.

INT. MANAGERIAL SUITE. MEZZANINE - NIGHT

Craig assists Patoff up the final stairs, with Elaine following.

Patoff looks towards Sang's office. The blinds are still closed. Police tape is across the door.

PATOFF

Thank you, I can carry myself from here.

Patoff walks (normally) towards Sang's office.

Reading his intention--

ELAINE

You can't go in there--

Patoff pushes open the door and walks through the yellow tape.

Elaine and Craig hurry in after him.

INT. SANG'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Patoff is already deep inside the office as Elaine and Craig enter.

PTSD kicks in, for both of them. Last time they hurried in here, a kid had just emptied a gun into their boss. And those scars are still evident.

Elaine walks towards the empty chair at the desk. On the glass wall behind the desk she sees a dark spot, so she inspects it closer--

Dry blood. With what may be a speck of brain crusted into it.

PATOFF

Yes. This will do.

ELAINE

I'm going to have to ask you to
leave--

PATOFF

It's vacant?

Elaine's ready to fly at him, but Craig handles it with a calm head.

CRAIG

I'm sorry if you've had a wasted
journey, Mr. Patoff, but there is
no business left to consult on.
Take a look around. We're
shuttered.

Patoff seats himself in Sang's office chair and opens his briefcase.

PATOFF

I'm contracted to do a job, and a
job I shall do. I wish to call a
full staff meeting for tomorrow
morning. Shall we say 9AM?

He removes a 20 page contract from the case and offers it to them.

PATOFF (CONT'D)

I think you'll find this lays out
Mr. Sang's wishes.

INT. LOBBY. COFFEE HUT. 1ST FLOOR - NIGHT

Elaine and Craig are at the coffee hut, on high stools, skim-reading the paper contract. Craig's fighting his way into a tiny cereal packet.

CRAIG

Who owns us?

ELAINE

When the lawyers are done - Sang's
mother. Who's in Busan. And speaks
no English.

CRAIG

Fuck, why did you let me get high?

ELAINE

(the contract)
It's what he says.

(MORE)

ELAINE (CONT'D)

He's here to consult directly with Sang on all business matters.

CRAIG

And in the absence of Sang? Who's in charge around here? Mr. Can't Get Up The Fucking Stairs?

ELAINE

Why are you asking me?

CRAIG

You were his assistant.

ELAINE

Creative liaison.

(comes clean)

I gave myself a title bump.

CRAIG

When?

ELAINE

When I applied for other jobs. You don't know what it's like out there. You don't try.

CRAIG

So after Sang was dead, you got promoted?

ELAINE

Hey, I fucking earned that.

CRAIG

Well hurry up and make yourself CEO, because right now we don't have one.

Elaine throws a look to the mezzanine level above. Maybe there's an opportunity here?

EXT. DOWNTOWN L.A - DAY

Helicopter view of the traffic over Downtown L.A. Colored rectangular cars negotiating the maze of streets. The same top down POV as the original Grand Theft Auto.

When we're in the outside community, we should often adopt styles and camera angles from the gaming world.

EXT. STREET. OUTSIDE CONVERTED WAREHOUSE - DAY

Busy in the street as Staff Members arrive at the entrance. On scooters, bikes, and ride shares. Clutching coffees and egg-white burritos.

A MAINTENANCE WORKER is using a pressurized water jet to remove the memorial graffiti from the brick and glass facade.

INT. LOBBY - DAY

That pressurized jet is pounding the glass from outside.

The CompWare lobby is filled with Staff, playing games and chatting in small huddles.

ON THE WALLS - the gigantic screens show little live thumbnails of the Staff Members working remotely, dialed in. There are as many faces on the screens as there are in the building.

Craig is just arriving, showered and dressed. He laces through the Crowd and finds Elaine.

CRAIG

Is he here?

ELAINE

I don't think he left.

Craig recognizes a HUDDLE OF 3, all wearing the same colored clothes, across the lobby.

CRAIG

Shouldn't someone talk to legal?

ELAINE

I already did. Until they close us down or sell us off, everything sanctioned by Sang is in play.

Phone alarms in the Crowd start to sound off. Elaine checks the time on her phone - 9:00.

They look up to the mezzanine to see--

Patoff, emerging into view, taking a position on the top step.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. TOP OF STAIRS. MEZZANINE - DAY

Patoff laces his hands at his chest and looks down over the Staff, awaiting their undivided attention. Little colored gems, shuffling across the board.

Gradually, FACES start looking upward. The background chatter drops until it's totally silent and EVERYONE is staring up from the lobby--

At Patoff. Looking down over them.

PATOFF

Good morning, comrades.
Unfortunately Mr. Sang cannot join
us today, but he sends his best
regards.

The Staff can't be sure if this is a joke or not. It lands awkwardly.

PATOFF (CONT'D)

To the wonderful faces I see below,
thank you for being an important
part of CompWare's success. I am
looking forward to getting to know
you all personally. You are valued.

He turns to the wall mounted screens.

PATOFF (CONT'D)

Those of you working remotely, you
have exactly one hour to get here
in person or your contracts of
employment will be terminated.
(smiles)
That is all.

Patoff turns away and returns to his office.

Silence in the lobby. No one quite knows how to react.

On the wall mounted screens, thumbnails start to disappear as calls are disconnected in the rush to get to the office.

Craig and Elaine watch the Staff vacating to their work areas.

CRAIG

Can he do that?

ELAINE

He seems to think so.

INT. CODING BAY. CRAIG'S DESK - DAY

Craig approaches his desk and looks out across the coding bay. Staff are conferring in huddles. No one knows what's going on.

A CODER at the next desk spins towards Craig.

CODER

What are we supposed to be doing?

A parakeet swoops over Craig's head, forcing him to duck.

CRAIG

You know how to catch a parakeet?

INT. ELAINE'S DESK. MEZZANINE - DAY

Elaine is at her desk, cell phone to her ear.

ELAINE

(into phone)

Hi, Elaine Hayman for Suzanne Delaney.

(...)

Is she contactable?

(...)

I'm following up about a position we--

(...)

No, I understand.

(...)

Things come up.

She hangs up the call, looks towards the balcony. Where she sees--

Patoff, looking down over the coding bay.

INT. MEZZANINE. TOP OF STAIRS - DAY

Patoff is at the balcony rail, looking down at the coding bay below, as Elaine approaches from her desk.

ELAINE

Is there anything I can help you with, Mr. Patoff?

PATOFF

What do you make?

ELAINE

Make?

PATOFF

The thing that you sell.

ELAINE

We produce games. For your phone.

PATOFF

And people pay for these games?

ELAINE

In a roundabout way. I'm surprised Sang didn't mention this when he engaged your services. It's pretty much the only thing he did in his short life.

PATOFF

Mr. Sang and I discussed wider concepts.

ELAINE

Such as?

Patoff sniffs the air, flaring his nostrils.

PATOFF

There it is again. Do you smell that?

He peers down over the work bay, where Staff are milling back and forth.

ELAINE

I don't smell anything.

PATOFF

Putrid fruit. Decaying flowers.

He leans into Elaine's neck and sniffs deeply.

PATOFF (CONT'D)

No. It's not you.

ELAINE

I'm relieved to hear that.

Patoff checks his wristwatch.

PATOFF

I have ten o'clock exactly.

He walks towards the top step. Looks down the glass staircase. He hesitates. It seems so high to him. Dizzying.

PATOFF (CONT'D)

It's an entirely different prospect going down, isn't it?

ELAINE

Can I show you to the elevator?

INT. LOBBY - DAY

The elevator doors open and Patoff walks out, followed by Elaine.

As he crosses to the entrance door, Staff are still arriving, having hurried in to make the deadline.

Patoff reaches the door, just as an employee in a wheelchair (Lois, 20s) is approaching. But just before she can make it to the assisted entrance pad--

Patoff closes the door and flips the lock.

Lois pushes repeatedly on the big switch but the doors don't open.

ELAINE

Let her in.

PATOFF

I gave them all one hour.

ELAINE

She's right there. If you just open the--

PATOFF

Why should I make an exception for her? What is different about this employee from the others?

He's baiting her and she's smart enough to know it. She's not going to mention the chair.

ELAINE

Nothing.

PATOFF

It's not as if she didn't have transport.

Patoff walks back towards the elevator.

Elaine looks at Lois, pleading with her to open the door. She mouths a "sorry" through the glass.

INT. OUTSIDE PATOFF'S OFFICE. MEZZANINE - DAY

A MAINTENANCE WORKER is scratching the stenciled lettering of "Sang-woo" off the glass door.

INT. CODING BAY. CRAIG'S DESK - DAY

Craig is at his desk, on his laptop, playing a demo of a game in development. Just looking busy.

Elaine joins him. Pissy.

ELAINE

He doesn't even know what we do.

CRAIG

Did you check your on line banking this morning? We all got paid. With a cherry on top.

ELAINE

Did you hear what he did to Lois?

CRAIG

Wheelchair Lois or cleft palate Lois?

ELAINE

Who the fuck does he think he is?

CRAIG

I've been looking into that.

ELAINE

And?

CRAIG

We'll talk at lunch.

ELAINE

I want to talk now.

CRAIG

Did you get rid of all the cameras?

ELAINE

Not yet.

CRAIG

Then maybe we should talk at lunch.

EXT. FOOD TRUCK. TOY DISTRICT - DAY

In amongst the colorful, bustling markets of the Toy District, Craig and Elaine are in line together at a food truck, getting lunch.

CRAIG

He doesn't exist. There's sweet fuck all out there on Regus Patoff, business consultant.

(ordering)

Can I get the corn but with no salt? It's OK if it's cooked in salt but don't add any extra.

(...)

Craig.

ELAINE

Why would Sang hire a consultant? We were doing well. I mean we were in debt but he bought a shit-ton of toys-

(ordering)

Cheese quesadilla. No conditions.

(...)

Elaine.

They move into position to wait. A daily dance.

CRAIG

What if he's not a consultant? What if Mr. Pantsoff is one of these gurus?

ELAINE

Sang would never fall for that.

CRAIG

They don't give you a choice. They worm their way in with the top CEOs and before you know it the mission statement is being translated into Hindu or Sikh or fucking Klingon. They're parasites.

ELAINE

Sang wasn't into any of that. He didn't have friends, he didn't have hobbies, he didn't get laid.

(MORE)

ELAINE (CONT'D)

As sad as this sounds, I was the closest to him. If someone was sniffing around, I would have known about it.

CRAIG

Well they must have met somewhere, because he didn't find him online.

They collect their food and begin the walk back to work, eating and brainstorming as they go. We follow just above and behind them, in a GTA V perspective.

CRAIG (CONT'D)

What's the date on that contract?

ELAINE

Why?

CRAIG

If they signed in person, maybe Patoff came to visit the office.

She latches onto his thinking.

ELAINE

We'll have it recorded. Sang kept it all on the server.

CRAIG

You have access?

ELAINE

I installed the system. I've been watching y'all take shits for months.

CRAIG

There are cameras in the restrooms?

ELAINE

I'm not proud of the things he made me do.

INT. MANAGERIAL SUITE. MEZZANINE - DAY

Elaine climbs the final stairs, returning from lunch. She notices something unusual--

All of the Managers are standing at their glass doors, as if on military inspection. Then Elaine notices--

Patoff, walking through the Mezzanine, introducing himself to one Manager at a time.

WITH PATOFF -- as he looks at the stenciled name on the glass door: "JANELLE DEMATEO". And the smiling face of Janelle (30s) beside it.

PATOFF

Hello, I'm Mr. Regus Patoff.

Patoff shakes Janelle's hand, then leans into her neck and sniffs her skin. Just as he did earlier to Elaine.

Reassured that Janelle's odor isn't what's repulsing him, Patoff walks away to the next waiting Manager.

Elaine sees her opportunity. She walks towards Patoff's office and slips inside, unseen.

INT. PATOFF'S OFFICE (FORMELY SANG'S OFFICE) - DAY

Elaine walks towards the desk and searches. The blinds are still drawn shut so she goes undetected.

She finds the briefcase and fiddles to try and open it. Classic double combination latch locks. The numbers are already positioned at 040 201.

Elaine snaps the latches and they pop out.

INT. MANAGERIAL SUITE. MEZZANINE - DAY

Patoff is shaking the hand of Iain Bryce (30s), a marketing exec under inspection.

PATOFF

Hello, I'm Mr. Regus Patoff.

Patoff leans in and sniffs Iain's neck. But this time he is not reassured. He pinches his nostrils shut, not even hiding his displeasure.

INT. PATOFF'S OFFICE - DAY

The briefcase is open and Elaine is looking down at the paper contract. She flips through the document until she comes to the signature page.

Two squiggles. And below them, the hand written date:
24/03/21.

Elaine puts the contract away and is about to close the briefcase, when she notices a bulge in one of the compartments. She reaches in and pulls out--

A stack of printed photographs. The top picture is of Sang, walking alone in the street. She flicks to the next--

Sang arriving at the warehouse, with Elaine at his side.

Sang through a restaurant window, eating alone.

There are 20 surveillance photographs of Sang, all taken just before his death.

A shadow rolls past the closed blinds - someone's approaching - and so Elaine quickly returns the photographs and closes the briefcase.

She looks again at the combination on the catches: 040 201. Then she snaps the catches into place and returns the briefcase to where she found it, just as--

Patoff enters. Surprised to find her there.

PATOFF

They said you went for lunch.

ELAINE

Twenty-four minutes, there and back.

She needs an excuse to be in here. So she looks towards the little dried blood stains on the glass, behind the desk.

ELAINE (CONT'D)

Our cleaning service is the worst. I called and complained. Apparently they're not contracted to deal with glass, that's a different outfit. I was on at Sang to fire them before--

She stops herself. Still roar.

ELAINE (CONT'D)

If you like, I can have someone come up and take care of it.

PATOFF

No, that's fine. You can do it yourself.

Not exactly what she was proposing, but he's already onto the next thing.

PATOFF (CONT'D)

You'll be pleased to know that I identified it, and have taken measures to eradicate it.

ELAINE

What's that?

PATOFF

The rancid smell out there. It won't be bothering us any longer.

ELAINE

That is a relief.

She humors him and leaves.

INT. CODING BAY. CRAIG'S DESK - DAY

Craig is at his desk, testing code, when he sees Elaine descend from above with her laptop under her arm.

She flicks her eyes at him, to say "follow me".

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM. CODING BAY - DAY

Elaine enters with Craig closely behind. She puts her laptop on the table and logs in.

ELAINE

Twenty-fourth of March. I was back East with my sister all that week, Dana was handling his appointments.

Craig sits beside her and stares at the screen.

ON THE LAPTOP SCREEN -- multiple thumbnails of every office and restroom in this warehouse. Everyone, everywhere, being filmed.

CRAIG

Is that live?

ELAINE

If you ever tell anyone I did this--

CRAIG

You're leaving anyway, aren't you? E-Five, did you say? Yeah, they're doing OK. They'll be around for at least another year or two.

ELAINE

My contact over there had to leave town. A family emergency.

CRAIG

Bummer.

He can see that she doesn't want to talk about it.

Elaine clicks a few buttons, brings up a folder of date archived files.

ELAINE

It's archived, it'll take a minute.

She rises to leave.

CRAIG

You're not helping?

ELAINE

It doesn't take two.

CRAIG

I thought we could hang. I booked the room all afternoon. We could say we're liaising on- what? Creative strategies?

He pulls a bag of candy from his pants pocket.

CRAIG (CONT'D)

I got Sour Patch.

She considers the offer. It would be more fun than--

ELAINE

I've gotta clean up a spill first.

Elaine leaves as the file fully downloads.

Craig clicks on the LOBBY CAM, feeds himself a handful of candy, and watches footage from the 24th of March. Staff happily arriving for work.

INT. MEZZANINE - DAY

Elaine walks up the final stairs, carrying a bucket of soapy water and sponge cloth. She starts towards Patoff's office but sees something in another office that takes her attention-

Six Managers are gathered around Iain's desk, in conference.

A mutiny? Elaine wonders.

INT. IAIN'S OFFICE. MEZZANINE - DAY

Elaine enters, carrying the bucket of soapy water. She sees Iain at his desk, crying, as he's consoled by his Co Workers.

ELAINE
What's happened?

Mari (20s) crosses to Elaine and leads her back out of the office for privacy, closing the glass door behind them.

MARI
He's firing Iain.

ELAINE
Why?

MARI
He doesn't like the way he smells.
It's constructive humiliation. Who
put this man in charge?

ELAINE
Sang did. We think.

MARI
Iain relies on this job. You know
there's nothing out there for
people like him any longer.

Elaine looks at the sobbing middle aged man through the glass. Can't help but take pity on him.

ELAINE
Let me see what I can do.

Elaine walks towards Patoff's office, carrying the soapy bucket.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM. CODING BAY - DAY

Craig is at the laptop, bored, covered in sugar dust. He's scanning through footage from the lobby on 24th March. He perks up when he sees--

ON THE LAPTOP SCREEN -- Patoff entering in the reception area. Neatly tailored. Alone.

INT. PATOFF'S OFFICE - DAY

Elaine enters, carrying the bucket. She sees Patoff sitting at the desk, playing games on his phone.

ELAINE

I can do this later if you're busy.

PATOFF

You can work around me.

Elaine soaks the cloth and gets to work cleaning the small traces of splattered blood from the walls and desk.

Patoff remains focused on his game.

PATOFF (CONT'D)

Whoever would have thought that pressing a repetitive sequence of buttons could hypnotize a young mind into murder.

ELAINE

They don't know what made him do it.

PATOFF

To think. You could train an army of soldiers from their beds. And when you're ready--

He CLICKS thumb and forefinger, to wake us from a trance.

ELAINE

Actually gaming has been proven to increase memory, focus concentration, and enhance problem solving abilities... In some instances it can even benefit social skills.

Patoff smiles to himself.

PATOFF

(the game)

I just picked up a baby's bottle. Do I feed the baby? Or restore my own health?

ELAINE

If you wanna beat the game... eventually you've gotta sacrifice the baby.

Elaine wrings out the cloth in the bucket. Pink with blood.
Sick of playing nice.

ELAINE (CONT'D)

Look, everyone here is pretty
fucking grateful to be getting paid
right now. Myself included. But you
can't go around firing people who
are five seconds out of curfew, or
because of the way they smell.

He looks up from the game. Surprised to be questioned by her.

PATOFF

My purpose is to improve the
business. For Mr. Sang.

ELAINE

Sang's gone. All that's left of him
is in my bucket.

PATOFF

You liked working for him, didn't
you?

ELAINE

I felt sorry for him. I think he
had too much too young. He wasn't
equipped for all this.

PATOFF

It's rude of me but I am yet to
ask. What do you do here?

ELAINE

I was Sang's--
(fuck it)
I was his creative liaison.

PATOFF

And that's a position of
responsibility?

ELAINE

Great responsibility.

PATOFF

Then I'll leave the matter to you.
But if I smell him again, you're
both fired.

Elaine gets a PING on her phone. She checks the message.

From Craig. "Found him".

INT. IAIN'S OFFICE / MEZZANINE - DAY

Iain walks up the final stairs, carrying an empty, vintage, wooden soap box. He rests the wooden box on the chair and dejectedly begins to pack his drawers. His eyes are drawn to--

Elaine's bucket of soapy water and sponge cloth, just sitting on his desk.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM. CODING BAY - DAY

Elaine hurries inside and joins Craig at the laptop.

CRAIG

I got them together in Sang's office. 6:04 pm.

ON THE LAPTOP SCREEN -- a wide angle of Patoff entering the office and shaking Sang's hand.

CRAIG (CONT'D)

Any audio?

ELAINE

Not in there. He only wanted to know if the cleaners were stealing his candy.

They watch with interest as Sang and Patoff sit down and have a cordial, muted conversation.

INT. IAIN'S OFFICE / MEZZANINE - DAY

The blinds close on Iain's glass office.

Iain starts to undress himself. Off come the shoes. Then the shirt. Then the pants.

When he's finally naked, he gathers up the sponge cloth, soaks it in the soapy water, and proceeds to wash every inch of himself.

Although he's in private, he feels unbearable shame and humiliation.

We drift away to focus on that wooden soap box he was packing his things into. The box is emblazoned with a 1950s detergent brand. Beneath the branding it reads "REG US PAT OFF". Registered at the US patent office.

INT. MEZZANINE. OUTSIDE PATOFF'S OFFICE - DAY

The MAINTENANCE WORKER is finishing the name title on the glass door of Patoff's new office. It reads "REGUS PATOFF".

INT. PATOFF'S OFFICE - DAY

As the Maintenance Worker leaves, Patoff is relaxing at the desk, playing games on his phone.

Patoff gets a little rush from finishing the level on his game. He smiles to himself.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM. CODING BAY - DAY

ON THE LAPTOP SCREEN -- Sang is signing the contract. A deal has been done. Patoff gathers up the document and returns it to his briefcase.

CRAIG

Well he wasn't forced. He doesn't even look cajoled.

But Elaine isn't buying it.

ELAINE

He has photographs of him. In the brief case.

CRAIG

Blackmail?

ELAINE

Surveillance. Right up until Sang--

Elaine remembers another detail.

ELAINE (CONT'D)

040201.

CRAIG

What is that?

ELAINE

The numbers on Patoff's case. 4th of February, 2001. It's Sang's date of birth.

ON THE LAPTOP SCREEN -- Sang approaches Patoff for a handshake. But instead of reaching out a palm, he lowers himself onto his knees and begins to unbuckle Patoff's pants.

Craig and Elaine look to one another. This is taking a strange turn.

CRAIG

Was Sang--

ELAINE

No.

Patoff grips Sang's head and proceeds to violently fuck his throat.

Sang doesn't resist. As limp as a doll.

Patoff turns his head and looks directly at the lens of the hidden camera. Eyes burrowing into the screen.

At Elaine and Craig.

Watching him.

CUT TO BLACK.

End of Episode One