

A COOL GREEN PLACE

By

STEVE MILES

Steve Miles 2016

stevemiles80@yahoo.co.uk

FADE IN:

INT. OFFICE - REUBEN'S CUBICLE - DAY

A calculator rests atop a stack of paperwork.

REUBEN WELLS, early 30s, thin, nervous, sits at a desk, the computer screen reflected in his glasses.

He tightens at the sound of LAUGHTER --

Two CO-WORKERS, 20s, pass by the cubicle, jostling one another in good humour.

Reuben watches after them, suspicious.

He turns back to find a leaf on his keyboard. He traces it back to the YUCCA plant perched on the low divider shelf walling the cubicle. Its leaves encroach on his monitor.

FRANK (O.S.)

Hey.

Reuben frowns, searching out the voice.

FRANK (O.S.)

Don't ignore me, Reuben.

The Yucca shakes -- a hand reaches through the branches, fingers CLICK, impatient.

REUBEN

Hey, Frank, I er...

Reuben gives up the calculator. The hand retracts.

REUBEN

What's with the shrubs?

FRANK (O.S.)

S'posed to make us more productive.

REUBEN

Productive, how?

FRANK (O.S.)

You work better when you're relaxed. My guess, some ass-hat in H.R. got a subscription to Forbes. Don't you feel more relaxed?

REUBEN
You think they're testing us?

FRANK (O.S.)
I think you should get your own
calculator.

A limb from the Yucca droops over the screen. Reuben lifts it out of the way. Another falls in its place.

He grabs a stapler and SNAPS the leaves together, tucks them behind the monitor.

LATER

Steam rises from a cup of coffee.

Reuben types at his keyboard. He stops, frowns.

He stabs at the 'M' key.

INSERT MONITOR

The cursor blinks, no 'M'.

BACK TO SCENE

He turns the keyboard upside down, shakes it.

Dirt spills out over his desk and lap. TINK! He plucks up a used staple. Looks to the leaves, now separated.

Reuben flicks the staple into the trash.

He collects his mug, pauses.

Specks of dirt float on the coffee's surface.

He sighs and empties it into the Yucca's pot.

The liquid bubbles into the soil.

MAXWELL (V.O.)
Woah, fuurck... yeaahhh.

Reuben freezes.

MAXWELL (V.O.)
Pour it on my leaves, slowly.

Reuben stands. Quickly exits the cubicle.

AT THE COPIER

The machine WHIRS away, copies collecting in the tray.
Reuben's eyes roam the room, rattled, trying to fathom.

REUBEN'S CUBICLE

Reuben stands before his desk, hesitant.
The Yucca's leaves hang over his monitor.
He grabs the stapler --

MAXWELL (V.O.)
You ever think about goin' green?

He startles, drops the stapler --

INT. OFFICE - TOILETS - DAY

Reuben perches on the seat, deep breaths, anxious.
He spots the graffiti on the back of the door.
'You don't have to be mad to hide here, but cabbages...'

INT. OFFICE - REUBEN'S CUBICLE - DAY

Reuben steals in, takes up his seat.
He stares at the Yucca, waiting...
He prods the pot. Nothing.

LATER

Reuben beavers away, head down.

MAXWELL (V.O.)
Son of a bitch.

Reuben flinches. Ignores it.

MAXWELL (V.O.)
Milk's like what..? Like, hey,
what's a quart of milk?

REUBEN
I don't talk to shrubs.

MAXWELL (V.O.)
It's cheap, right, like they can't
give it away.

REUBEN
I'm not even here.

MAXWELL (V.O.)
Yeah, no, it's you, you're here.
Skinny guy, glasses. I watched you
eat soup through a biro.

Reuben stops. Looks up.

REUBEN
(whispered)
What do you want?

MAXWELL (V.O.)
I want you to bring a spoon--

REUBEN
Listen, I'm not into office pranks.
So just stop.

MAXWELL (V.O.)
This Frank punk's stealing your
milk over here an' you're bending
my stem?

Reuben slowly rises to peer over the cubicle.

FRANK, 30s, balding, stands at a kitchen area across the
room. He fits the cap back onto a bottle of milk and returns
it to a fridge.

MAXWELL (V.O.)
We gotta kill him.

Reuben does a slow take on the Yucca.

INT. OFFICE - CORRIDOR - DAY

Reuben marches along, Yucca in hand.

MAXWELL (V.O.)
Shit happens. Someone forgets to
get watered, left in direct
sunlight, I seen it-- where we
goin'?

REUBEN
Going for some air.

MAXWELL (V.O.)
Is it a cool green place?

REUBEN
A what?

MAXWELL (V.O.)
You know, shady, moist.

REUBEN
Yeah, cool, moist, you'll thrive.

MAXWELL (V.O.)
Promise?

REUBEN
Promise.

MAXWELL (V.O.)
I wanna thrive, man, I wanna thrive
so bad.

Reuben reaches for the handle of a trash chute --

H.R. GUY (O.S.)
Where you taking that Yucca?

Reuben freezes.

Behind him, H.R. GUY, 20s, scoots out of a side room in an office chair.

Reuben stares longingly at the chute, so close... He turns.

REUBEN
I'm allergic.

H.R. GUY
Can't be. All the plants were
chosen for their zero reactivity,
no oils, no pollens.

REUBEN
Then why am I getting headaches?

H.R. GUY
Why did I quit medical school for a
career in H.R? Don't put that Yucca
in the trash, it's expensive.

H.R. Guy rolls back into his office.

Reuben looks to the chute, grimaces.

INT. OFFICE - REUBEN'S CUBICLE - DAY

A Yucca branch lowers in front of the monitor.

MAXWELL (V.O.)
Gonna throw me in the trash?

Reuben inches lower.

The limb follows.

MAXWELL (V.O.)
Hoe me out like a garden weed? That
how this is? You heard the man, I'm
an expensive Yucca. I'm here tryna'
exact a little dairy based justice.

REUBEN
It's just a little milk!

MAXWELL (V.O.)
Do your nuts get cold in that
skirt?

Reuben tips a cup of coffee into Maxwell's pot.

MAXWELL (V.O.)
Sweet mother nature hold me.

LAUREN'S CUBICLE

Reuben leans over a desk.

Maxwell continues to WHOOP it up O.S.

REUBEN
I just wanna switch spots for a
little while, you know, mix it up?

LAUREN, 20s, petite, innocent, peers up at Reuben from her
work-station.

MAXWELL (V.O.)
Get back here, stick-man porn, put
a fairy on me my present's tense!

Reuben glances at the plant on Lauren's divider shelf. He
leans closer, conspiratorial.

REUBEN
Have you noticed anything, like...
weird happening since we got these
plants?

She draws her cardigan tighter.

Reuben thinks, weighing the risk.

REUBEN
You wanna swap shrubs?

LAUREN
I have a boyfriend.

MAXWELL (V.O.)
You're mine nerd bait.

REUBEN'S CUBICLE

Reuben works. He wears earmuffs.

MAXWELL (V.O.)
-- I can feel my roots, it's no
joke, man, feel my roots. I'm going
to pot.

Reuben produces a big tin of coffee.

MAXWELL (V.O.)
You said I'd thrive. Shady an'
moist, you promised.

Reuben levers the lid off with a spoon.

MAXWELL (V.O.)
Gonna die here, Reub'. Like some
wilted succulent. You know what I
never saw? -- The world.

REUBEN
(low)
You're vegetation, you don't get to
see the world.

MAXWELL (V.O.)
They tell you that, huh?

Reuben searches his desk, frustrated, impatient.

MAXWELL (V.O.)
Fine, man, gimme the whole frickin
pot. Finish it--

Reuben stands, looks around. Sees his mug on Frank's desk.

His jaw tightens.

MAXWELL (V.O.)
I was tryna' spare you the shame.
That was wrong of me. I mean, it's
got your name on it, but...

Reuben shakes the coffee directly into Maxwell's pot.

MAXWELL (V.O.)
I was afraid you'd pussy out, be
all like, Frank's my friend--

REUBEN
He is my friend.

MAXWELL (V.O.)
He hates you.

REUBEN
I'm not killing Frank.

MAXWELL (V.O.)
He steals your things.

REUBEN
He lets me use his calculator.

MAXWELL (V.O.)
Frank plus dead equals Reuben's
calculator.

Reuben snatches a bottle, struggles with the seal. He rips
off the cap, water spills out.

REUBEN
I'm not killing Frank!

Reuben pauses, breathless, realising he's said it out loud.

He does a slow take on the cubicle entrance to see Lauren
stood there clutching her plant. She just stares...

OUTSIDE THE CORNER OFFICE

A name plate on the door: J.M. DAVIES. MANAGING DIRECTOR.

Door opens, Reuben emerges looking flush with humiliation.

He marches to his cubicle, slips inside, reappears with his jacket and lunch-bag. He heads off around a corner...

...he races back into view, snatches up the Yucca and darts off again, losing his lunch-bag in the process.

The rest of the office pauses briefly to digest this before returning to work.

INT. REUBEN'S HATCHBACK - DAY

The Yucca rides shotgun.

Reuben drives.

REUBEN

I started there as an intern. Six months, unpaid. Five receptionists, twelve mail guys, seventy-two toner cartridges, I lose my job over a houseplant.

MAXWELL (V.O.)

Can we put the roof down?

REUBEN

It's a hatchback.

MAXWELL (V.O.)

What's a hatchback?

REUBEN

(distant)

I was the only one who knew how to change the toner.

MAXWELL (V.O.)

We should stop for a hitch-hiker.

REUBEN

I don't pick up hitch-hikers.

MAXWELL (V.O.)

You don't talk to shrubs.

Reuben burns the Yucca a look.

MAXWELL (V.O.)
Where we goin' Reub'?

REUBEN
Out of the city, clear our heads --
my head. Clearing my head.

MAXWELL (V.O.)
Is it a cool green place?

Reuben flashes a big lying grin.

REUBEN
Yeah, buddy, a cool green place.

MAXWELL (V.O.)
Hallelujah, two buddies trippin'
the road. I've wanted this since I
was a cutting.
(muttering)
Never said nothing 'bout picking
'em up...

EXT. DESERTED STRETCH OF HIGHWAY - DAY

Reuben, dusty, sweaty, scoops out a hole with his hands.

MAXWELL (V.O.)
Here?

REUBEN
What's wrong with here?

MAXWELL (V.O.)
It's here.

REUBEN
You're a desert species.

MAXWELL (V.O.)
Nah, just put me back in the
hatchback. We'll go for coffee.
Good coffee, none of that vendo
crap. Come on buddy, those Vegans
won't murder themselves.

REUBEN
I'm planting you.

MAXWELL (V.O.)
Not here, please, buddy. There's no
shade--

REUBEN
There's enough shade.

MAXWELL (V.O.)
Does this place look moist to you?

REUBEN
There'll be a rainy season.

Reuben rakes his fingers through a handful of earth. Lets it sift through his fingers. Dry, harsh dirt.

REUBEN
How do you even know what good coffee is!

MAXWELL (V.O.)
I wanna know. Like I wanna see the world. I want, to thrive!

INT. REUBEN'S HATCHBACK - DAY

The Yucca, seatbelted into the passenger seat.

Reuben hunches over the wheel, dusty, wired.

REUBEN
We'll just drive, take our time. Do the sights. A few days is all, a few days. Shady, moist, all it is...we don't have to kill anyone.

He looks over to the passenger seat.

The Yucca, strapped there in silence. Leaves bobbing in time with the road.

EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY - DAY

A HITCHER, 20s, stands at the roadside, thumb outstretched.

Reuben's hatchback blasts past. It slows to a stop. Reverse lights blink on.

The Hitcher jogs to catch up. Pauses at the passenger side window.

HITCHER
Thanks man. What's with the shrub?

REUBEN

It's a Yucca. Helps me relax.

The Hitcher shrugs, climbs in back.

The Hatchback peels out...

FADE OUT