

The Testing Point

PRODUCTION PLANNING

UPDATE

'The Testing Point' - SUMMARY

"The Testing Point" (working title) is a feature film following the story of a good business (Leadgate) as it struggles to meet the demands of its highly dysfunctional parent company (Ninebanks).

When Jane Perrin is appointed as a non-executive director of Ninebanks she is asked to investigate what is wrong at Leadgate. But is she looking in the right place?

As she begins to uncover the truth, she is confronted with the question, will she be a force for good or become part of the problem?

The film explores why good people do bad things, how conscious and unconscious abuse of power can occur, and how easy it is for leaders to 'look the other way' to achieve their goals.

"The Testing Point" - CHARACTER BREAKDOWNS

RICHARD MOSS (38-45)

Richard is the CEO of Leadgate Products. Relaxed, charismatic, good with women, a bit too good, he's a very able businessman who is actually less secure and confident than he appears. He's been through a damaging divorce and occasionally shows the sensitivity that lies beneath the alpha-male exterior. Had previously worked for Alan Gower at a different company and has been brought in by Alan to do a turnaround job at Leadgate, which he knows may eventually result in the sale of the business unless he can move it forward fast. Feeling the strain to produce the numbers. Upset by Holly's resignation, who is pregnant with his child, and having also been close to Susan, he's slightly out of control.

3 days rehearsal + 8 shooting days (London & Ashford, Kent)

SUSAN ALOGOSA (38-43)

Susan is the Financial Director at Leadgate having worked her way up the finance route over many years. Now forty, she left school after A levels and eventually worked her way through an unpaid year at university to qualify as an accountant. Possibly from the Birmingham/West Midlands area she is by far the most successful person in her family. She is by far the most successful person in her family, to whom she remains close, and feels responsible for. Single, she's very much a career woman, conscious of how she presents herself, highly competent in the finance role, but too loyal to Richard, with whom she has had a fling. Determined to be successful, and with high ethical standards, she seems doomed to be the 'nearly girl' on account of her background, something she just begins to realize during the course of the film.

3 days rehearsal + 7 shooting days (London & Ashford, Kent)

JANE PERRIN (40-45)

Jane is the newly appointed Non-Executive Director on the Board of Ninebanks. Following a highly distinguished academic career, including Oxford and Harvard she had a stellar early career in marketing before giving it up in her mid-thirties to opt for a portfolio 'non-executive' career. Now in her early forties she's enjoyed some success, but the role at Ninebanks is definitely a step up for her. A highly successful equestrian in her youth, she remains competitive and highly ambitious, although that is to a certain extent hidden behind a very cool, elegant, self-possessed public persona. Potentially mixed race (but open to all ethnicities) with a mid-Atlantic accent, she has children although they do not appear in her professional life. Marital status unclear. Not naturally empathetic, her experience at Ninebanks and what she discovers there seems to be a personal revelation for her. Or perhaps not...

3 days rehearsal + 7 shooting days (London & Ashford, Kent)

DAVID BLACKETT (50-55)

David is the environmental manager of the Leadgate business and has been there all his life since he joined as a science graduate in his twenties. Now in his early fifties David is disappointed with his career and has difficulty making an impact, often feeling that his contribution and loyalty are undervalued. He is nonetheless a dedicated company servant who cares deeply about the Leadgate business and the people within it, to the extent of becoming slightly messianic, hence his lone pursuit of gas escapes from the quarry. He is tall, balding, slightly stooped, tentative demeanour, tendency to wear tweed jackets with leather elbow patches, and is probably a steam train enthusiast, conflicted by the use of fossil fuels. He is married and has one brilliant daughter doing a PHD in applied physics at Oxford and on whom his hopes are pinned for a career more successful than his own.

3 days rehearsal + 6 shooting days (London & Ashford, Kent)

SIR WILLIAM BROWN (60-65)

In his early sixties, tall, well dressed and patrician, Sir William is Chair of Ninebanks. A product of a wealthy background and a career in the City, he oozes entitlement and requires recognition of his abilities by all around him. Ex Charterhouse and Cambridge, he left his last company when it was taken over by JP Morgan ("never did like the way the Yanks do business"). He owns a large country estate on the Surrey/Hampshire border and has a town house in Belgravia (where he spends most of his time as his focus is on London and his reputation). His personal life is unclear, there was a wife in the past, but he is a little uncomfortable around women. He does not appear to have any interests other than himself, has never been asked to Chair any prestigious public bodies and is puzzled by that. He sees the turnaround of Ninebanks as his personal ticket to the House of Lords. And woe betide anyone who gets in his way.

3 days rehearsal + 5 shooting days (London & Ashford, Kent)

ALAN GOWER (50-55)

CEO of Ninebanks, Alan is an engineer by background, this is his second CEO role having previously established his reputation at an engineering company. He is a brisk, energetic, 'sleeves rolled up' type of man, with a Scottish or possibly regional accent, effective at what he does. Although appointed by Sir William, he is not part of the establishment and to a certain extent has a difficult relationship with him, resulting in a damaging and uncharacteristic hesitation – he knows he's being bullied but can't quite identify how or why. A sound businessman, and a good CEO, and quite a sympathetic character, he is not 'a natural' for the large-scale business restructuring and acquisitions that Sir William demands. He's in the wrong job, with the wrong boss, at the wrong time.

3 days rehearsal + 4 shooting days (London)

GRACE THOMPSON (33-38)

In-house Legal Counsel at Leadgate, Grace, in her mid-thirties, is an inflexible personality who knows the law but lacks commerciality, has difficulty communicating and is thus pretty ineffective at her job. Rather in awe of Richard she would very much like to build up her role, but the limit of her ambition is to have a formal position on the Executive Board of Leadgate. Although she would never admit it, she is intimidated by the "head office" of Ninebanks. She has a nice private life, steady partner, tennis club, and is very fond of protecting her work-life balance. Friends with Holly, without being close, she is upset by her resignation. Nasty things don't seem to happen in her world.

3 days rehearsal + 3 shooting days (London)

HOLLY THOMAS (33-37)

Holly is the recently resigned sales director of part of Leadgate Products business, reporting to Richard Moss. Mid-thirties, she had been there for ten years, her second job following a degree in French and business studies and was very good at her job. Popular and charming, attractive, smiles easily and has a sense of humour, very loyal to her team who were and are dedicated to her. Thrives on close personal relationships but got too close to Richard and is now pregnant with his child. Confused about her feelings towards both Richard and the business, she wrote an emotional letter of resignation which she rather regrets.

2 days rehearsal + 2 shooting days (London & Ashford, Kent)

JOHN MILLER (45-55)

Diffident, prematurely aged. John is the rather useless Finance Director of Ninebanks. He is Sir William's 'guy' to do Sir William's bidding. John brings the main comedic relief of the film. He features in several places across the film, interrupting Alan and Jane's first scene before being shooed away, walks into an empty boardroom expecting to find the rest of the team to meet with him, and features in the final boardroom scene before being cut off by Richard. It is essentially a running joke across the film that despite his senior role, John never is given the chance to speak.

KAT (35-45)

Executive assistant to Sir William Brown, Chairman of Ninebanks

Shooting Schedule

Shooting Date	Shooting Location	Scene Number
09/03/2022	St Pancras Hall	Rehearsal
10/03/2022	St Pancras Hall	Rehearsal
11/03/2022	St Pancras Hall	Rehearsal
12/03/2022	Uxbridge	6
		8
		5 (L)
		7A
		7B
13/03/2022	Uxbridge	10
14/03/2022	Uxbridge	18B
		18A
		3D
		3E
		3F
18/03/2022	Ashford - Holly's House	3G
		11A
		11B
		18J
		1A
19/03/2022	Ashford - Smiths Medical	1B
		12
		18C
		18G
		19D
		3A
		3B
		3C
4A		
20/03/2022	Pullman	9
21/03/2022	Pullman	17
22/03/2022	Pullman	18D
		18E
		18F
		18H
		18I
		19A
		19B
		19C
23/03/2022	Pullman	15
		4B
		4C
		4D
		5 (N)
24/03/2022	Sons and Daughters	14
24/03/2022	St Pancras Hall	18K
26/03/2022	Uxbridge	13
27/03/2022	Uxbridge	16

Cast Costs and Requirements

Set Pay

Character	# Days Required	Rental Cost	Total Cost
Richard	8	£250	£2,000
Susan	7	£250	£1,750
Jane	7	£250	£1,750
David	6	£250	£1,500
Grace	3	£250	£750
William	5	£250	£1,250
Alan	4	£250	£1,000
Holly	2	£250	£500
Emily	2	£100	£200
Kat	3	£100	£300
John Miller	3	£175	£525
TV News Presenter	1	£100	£100
Outside news Reporter	1	£100	£100
Actor Days	52		£11,725

Travel / Accomodation

# Days Required	Rental Cost	Total Cost
8	£50	£400
7	£50	£350
7	£50	£350
6	£50	£300
3	£50	£150
5	£50	£250
4	£50	£200
2	£50	£100
2		£0
3		£0
3	£50	£150
1		£0
1		£0
52		£2,250

**£50 / travel & accomodation per actor and crew per day outside of zones 1-6 (for London)
and then >10 miles from Ashford (for Ashford)**

Number of Days of Costumes Required

	How many days
Richard	8
Susan	6
Jane	9
David	6
Grace	3
Sir William	5
Alan	4
Holly	4
Kat	3
John Miller	3

Cars Required

Description	Date Required
David's Car - Generic Coupe	18-Mar
Jane's Taxi - Black Cab	19-Mar
Richard's Car - Porche	18 Mar and 19 Mar
Richard's Car - Family Car	18-Mar
Susan's Car - Audi TT	19-Mar
William's Car - Audi Limo	19-Mar

Extras Required

Shooting Location	Extras	Call Times	
12/03/2022	Uxbridge	Office workers (X4)	9AM-1PM
14/03/2022	Uxbridge	Warehouse workers (X3)	9AM-1PM
18/03/2022	Ashford - Holly's House	Pedestrians (X2)	8AM-4PM
19/03/2022	Ashford - Smiths Medical	Chauffeur, Taxi Driver	8AM-12PM
21/03/2022	Pullman	Board Members X4	8AM-4PM
23/03/2022	Pullman	Waiter, Customers (X8)	3PM-8PM
24/03/2022	Sons and Daughters	Waiter, Customers (X2)	6AM-10AM
24/03/2022	St Pancras Hall	Audience (X10)	12PM-4PM

Crew Roles

Crew	# Days Required
Director	15
DOP / Camera Operator	15
1st Assistant Director / Production Designer	15
2nd Assistant Director / Script Supervisor	12
Gaffer	15
Lighting Assistant / Spark	12
Line Producer	15
Production Assistant / Runner	12
Sound Lead	15
Sound Assistant / Runner	12
Hair / Make-Up	12
Total	

The Testing Point

KEY LOCATION PHOTOS



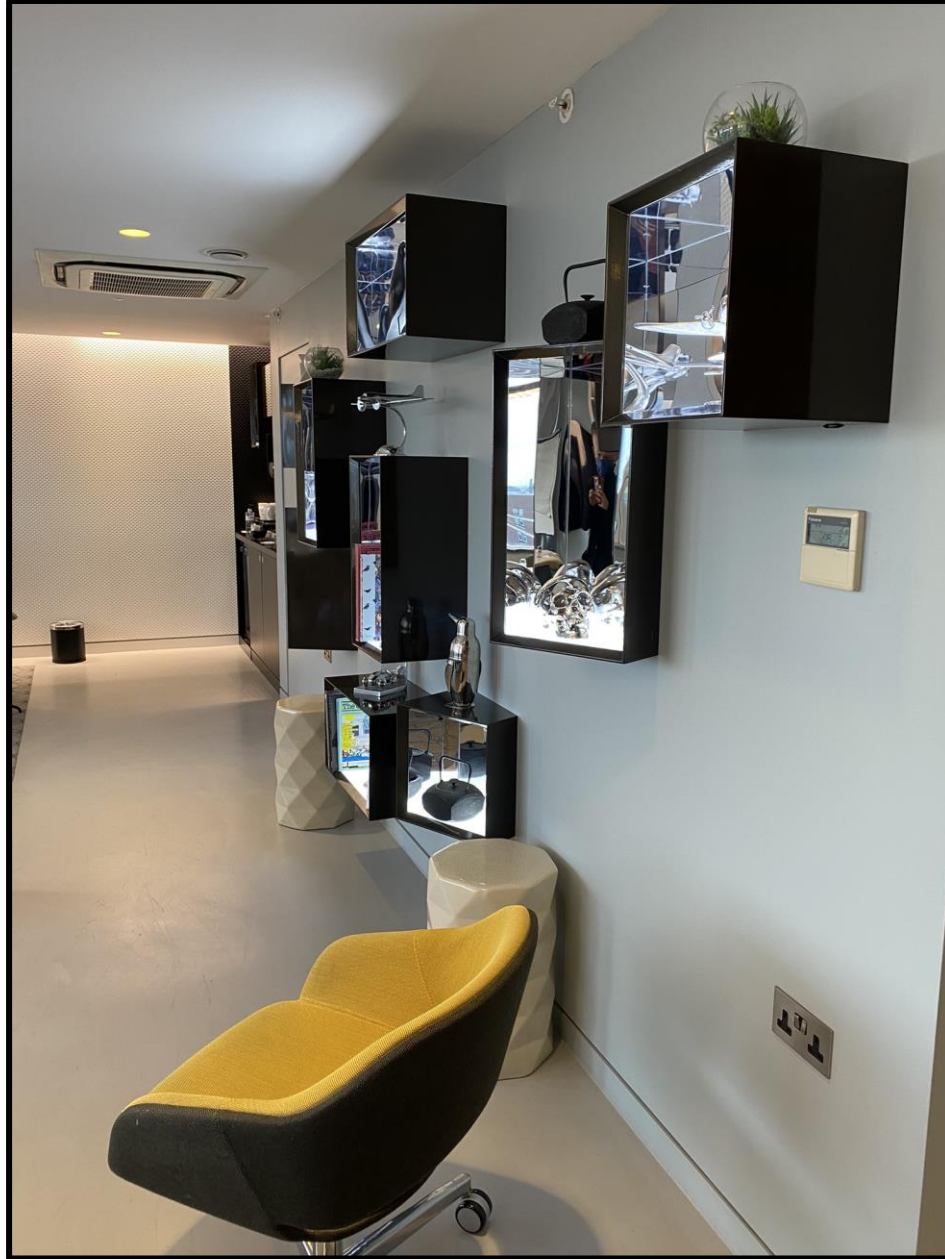
'Ninebanks' boardroom - Pullman Hotel (15th floor), London
4 shoot days



- One of 2 primary locations
- Large windows on one side of boardroom table



'Ninebanks' boardroom - Pullman Hotel (15th floor), London
4 shoot days



- Additional elements of 'Ninebanks' boardroom.
- Seating area shown in bottom left will be used for final scene of film

'Ninebanks' boardroom - Pullman Hotel (15th floor), London
4 shoot days



- Lift to 15th floor will be featured in a few sequences (top row)
- Lift opens up to wide hallway with large views of London from 15th floor (bottom left).
- Hallway leads to boardroom (bottom right)

'Leadgate' boardroom and offices – Outback Rigging, Uxbridge 5 shoot days

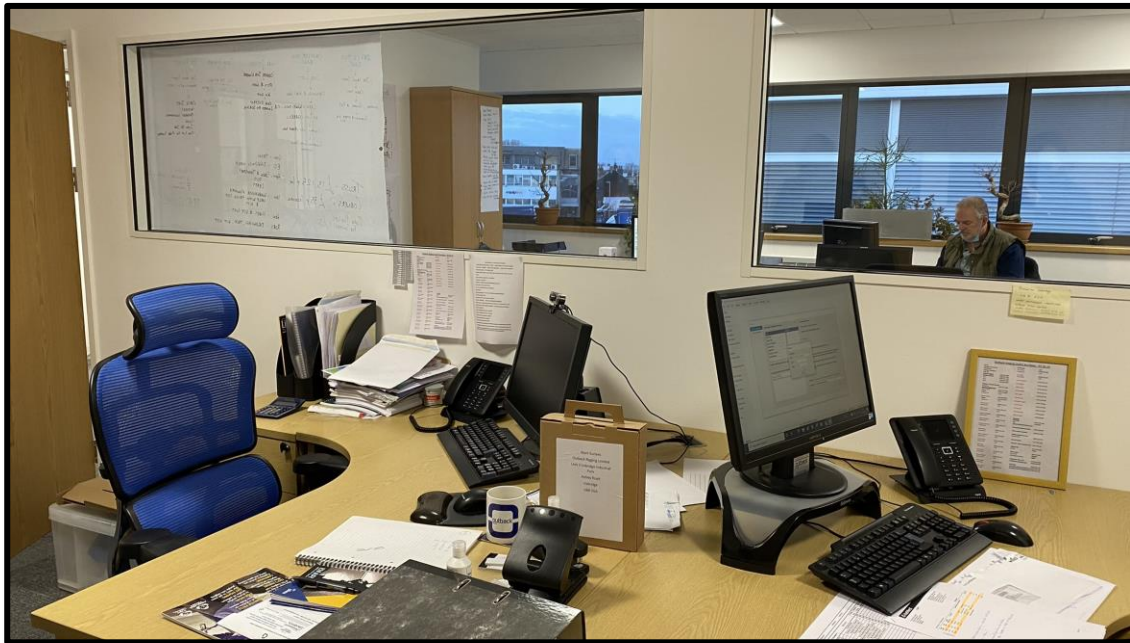


- One of 2 primary locations
- Lighting is very stark and white – likely to need to eliminate all in-house lighting and re-light using lighting from production.
- Production design will add additional elements to walls to minimize amount of 'white' space
- Boardroom location is 'tight' for space
- Large windows on two sides of boardroom table

'Leadgate' boardroom and offices – Outback Rigging, Uxbridge
5 shoot days



- Office hallway and office used for a small number of scenes
- Lighting is very stark and white – likely to need to eliminate all in-house lighting and re-light using lighting from production



'Leadgate' warehouse– Outback Rigging, Uxbridge
½ shoot day



- Used for 2 short scenes. Fairly evenly lit
- Sequences will be taken from ground floor (top left) and first floor (bottom row)



Bar - Pullman Hotel, London
½ shoot day



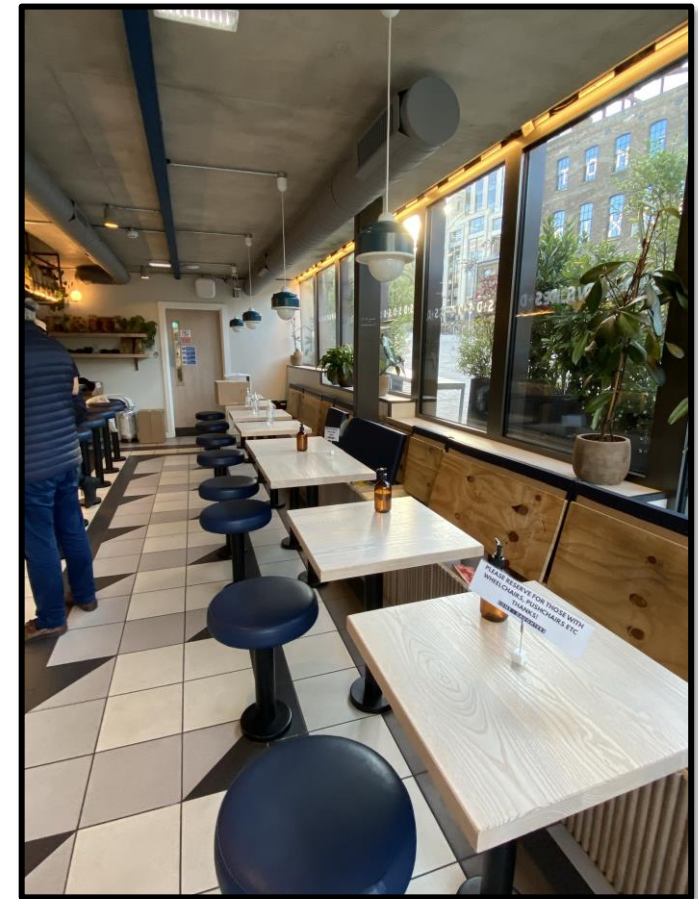
- Used for 1 scene (2 actors + 3 extras) taking place in a bar in the evening
- Low light environment



Coffee Shop – Sons & Daughters, Coal Drops Yard, London

½ shoot day

- Used for 1 scene (2 actors + 3 extras) taking place in a coffee shop in the morning



THE TESTING POINT

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TITLE CARD

"They were careless people - they smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness, or whatever it was that kept them together, and let other people clean up the mess they had made." F. Scott Fitzgerald

FADE TO:

1A EXT. MODERN HOUSING ESTATE - EVENING

1A

A grey evening, gloomy and foreboding. Middle aged man, DAVID BLACKETT, walks down road on modern housing estate, uncomfortable and slightly furtive. Turns up the path of a house, after looking around, and rings bell.

1B INT/EXT. HOLLY'S HOUSE - MODERN HOUSING ESTATE - EVENING 1B

Door opened by HOLLY THOMAS, mid thirties, well presented, pregnant.

HOLLY

Oh Hi David. Back again?

David nods assent.

We follow David as he walks around the side of the house to a shed (or garage) in which he picks up a a small electronic device with a blinking red light.

David presses a button on the device. We hear some beeps and a small print-out emerges from the machine (off-camera).

David tears off the print-out and looks at it, before looking away. He looks again and shakes his head with deep concern.

David walks back around the side of the house with the print-out in his hands, in deep thought.

David is taken by surprise by Holly who has remained at the front door waiting for him.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

Everything alright?

DAVID

(lost for words)

Oh. Yes....Thanks Holly

David grimaces and turns away. Holly shuts the door. David walks away in deep concern. This is going to be a problem. *

2 EXT. VARIOUS LONDON / LEADGATE - INTERCUT - DAY 2 *

Opening titles show various stock footage of London and the local area near to the Leadgate offices. The stock footage is intercut with real shots of our lead characters (RICHARD, SUSAN, SIR WILLIAM, JANE) traveling to work and approaching their respective offices (RICHARD/SUSAN approaching Leadgate contrasted by SIR WILLIAM and JANE approaching Ninebanks) *

3A INT. RICHARD'S CAR - DAY 3A

RICHARD MOSS, dark suit, white shirt, no tie, mid-forties, athletic build, drives his BMW into Leadgate Products offices car park, sports report soundtrack. *

Despite his normally relaxed exterior, Richard seems preoccupied and a little edgy. He taps somewhat anxiously on the steering wheel, while trying to drink from a coffee cup, which he struggles to get back into the cup holder with some level of irritation. *

Once Richard parks, he steadies himself for a moment and takes a breath, preparing to face the day and adopt his typical charming and confident persona. He grabs his jacket that has been thrown on the passenger seat, and steps out of the car. *

3B INT. SUSAN'S CAR - DAY 3B

SUSAN ALAGOSA, forty, black, immaculately dressed in business attire, is also driving towards the Leadgate car park. *

A pop song is playing in the background on the radio while she is on the phone to her sister. *

SUSAN

She'll have a fabulous time, first day at big school...aah, give her my love. And say hi to Mum for me, tell her I'll see her at the weekend. Yes...yes..sure. Gotta go Sis, bye..bye.

Susan turns up the music on the radio as she pulls in and parks. She takes a moment to check her make-up in the vanity mirror, before getting out of the car positively and confidently, ready to face the day. *

3C EXT. OUTSIDE LEADGATE - DAY 3C *

Richard greets Susan in car park, cheery, and they walk together towards the office, chatting from some distance. *

As they approach closer we hear their dialogue. *

RICHARD

See you in the office. Just going to look in on the guys. *

Susan nods and walks purposefully into office. *

3D INT. WAREHOUSE - LEADGATE - DAY 3D

Richard walks through the open warehouse door, pausing to sign in and to take-in the warehouse in front of him. The song that was playing in Susan's car is playing on a transistor radio in the warehouse. *

Richard walks towards the staircase, greeting people (both men and women) with a smile and a word. He's popular. As he walks up the staircase, he passes a warehouse worker (WAREHOUSE #1) with whom he exchanges a few words, perhaps about the football or their family. When he reaches the top of the stairs, he walks across the landing and turns a corner to the door that leads to the main office *

3E INT. OFFICE FLOOR - LEADGATE - DAY 3E *

We follow Richard as he walks through the office floor towards the boardroom. *

Richard's PA, EMILY, 25 years old, is sat at a desk outside the Leadgate Boardroom. They greet each other as he passes. *

RICHARD

Hi Em! *

EMILY

Morning Richard. *

Richard continues on and enters the Boardroom. *

3F INT. BOARDROOM - LEADGATE - DAY 3F *

When Richard enters, Susan is busily working on her laptop at the boardroom table. *

3G INT. BOARDROOM - LEADGATE - DAY 3G *

Time has passed a few minutes. *

We pick up mid-conversation between Susan and Richard. *

During this dialogue Richard paces around the room while *

Susan remains composed and determined, sat working on her *

laptop while talking to Richard. *

SUSAN

Richard, you can't simply ignore *

it. *

RICHARD

Why not? It's all made up. I never *

bullied her, and I certainly never *

sexually harassed anyone. Whatever *

that means. *

SUSAN

You wouldn't know. Just a bit of *

fun for you. I should know.... *

RICHARD

You got to be FD didn't you? *

Richard walks over to the coffee machine on a side table and *

fiddles with it. *

RICHARD (CONT'D)

This bloody thing has never worked. *

Moves to door and shouts. *

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Emily love, make us a coffee will *

you? Want one, Susan? *

SUSAN

No thanks. And by the way, I got to *

be FD because I worked harder and *

longer than anyone else. *

RICHARD

I might have had something to do *

with it [BEAT] Anyway, that's just *

me, there's no harm in it. I didn't *

bully her or do anything else she *

didn't want. *

SUSAN

She doesn't say you did. But she *

says she felt harassed and *

pressured to massage the numbers. *

RICHARD

You know that's rubbish. I was on her case because her numbers were poor and getting worse. That's my job. Not always pleasant, but necessary. And I don't fake numbers. Though I may try to improve them occasionally. You know that too.

*
*
*
*
*
*
*

SUSAN

Pressure to bring sales forward, aggressive provisioning?

*

RICHARD

All within acceptable limits Susan. My FD ensures that.

*
*

SUSAN

I try to, God knows. But acceptable limits can look different to different people you know.

*
*
*

Enter Emily with coffee, smiles at Richard, who smiles back and winks. Exit Emily.

*

RICHARD

Look, she's resigned. And she's pregnant so was probably going to leave anyway. Let it go. It's not as if she was a friend of yours.

*
*
*

SUSAN

I think we should be seen to do the right thing. There could be a claim.

*

RICHARD

OK fine. I'm not worried. Speak to HR or whoever, find someone independent to investigate me. Put the bracelets on me and take me down the station!

*

*

SUSAN

For Gods sake Richard, grow up!

*

RICHARD

Send for the inquisition! Stretched on the rack for the crime of being a male CEO! Now can we get on to the Year End forecast?

*

*

SUSAN

Since you mention torture. I just sent you the latest.

*
*

RICHARD

(Suddenly serious)

I know. But I've promised Alan I'll at least slow the rate of decline. And as he always says, [mimics accent] Fine words butter no parsnips.

*
*

They smile at each other, acknowledging a joke

*

RICHARD (CONT'D)

So what can you do for me?

SUSAN

Because we took all the costs relating to the Fabeffect failure at the end of last year, the bottom line numbers will look just about ok.

*

Richard nods

SUSAN (CONT'D)

But the underlying performance is dire. We just can't get the margins. You know the issues.

*
*

RICHARD

The team won't get prices up. We're a premium brand at an economy price.

*
*

SUSAN

It's not just that. Our costs are too high, Our product range, you say it's premium, I say it's dated. So do a lot of our people. And that's without being lumbered with the legacy costs.

*
*
*
*
*

RICHARD

Yes, but it's still a sound business. I just need more time to get at it, change the culture. Can you buy me some?

*
*

SUSAN

What do you mean, buy you time?

*

RICHARD

You know exactly what I mean
Susan...come on, you know the
drill.

*
*

SUSAN

That sort of thing doesn't always
end well Richard

*
*

RICHARD

And talking about the legacy
business, we could release some
more of those old provisions. That
would drop straight through to the
bottom line.

*
*

SUSAN

None of that has anything to do
with the trading performance.

RICHARD

Just go and look at it for me will
you. Please. Nothing over the top
but I need something to help me get
through this half.

SUSAN

No promises...

RICHARD

Thanks. I know I can count on you.
That's what makes us such a great
team

*
*
*

SUSAN

Still no promises...

RICHARD

(Visibly relaxing)
Fact is Susan, if I were Alan, and
I'd like to be in his position one
day, I wouldn't give me much time.
I'd be thinking about a sale.

*

SUSAN

(Taken aback)
Of Leadgate?

*

Richard nods, slowly.....

*

4A

EXT. OUTSIDE NINEBANKS - DAY

4A

Taxi pulls up and JANE PERRIN, early forties, smart, attractive, coolly confident, mid Atlantic or European accent, exits the cab while on the phone.

TAXI DRIVER

Thank you!

Jane completely ignores the driver and slams her door shut. The driver gives Jane a disparaging look as she walks towards the Ninebanks entrance.

JANE

I appreciate the offer but I've taken the Ninebanks role so I'm sorted for now...yes...yes...oh for sure. Stay in touch.

Jane ends call and enters the Ninebanks entrance.

Meanwhile a chauffeur driven executive car pulls up to the Ninebanks offices.

In the back is SIR WILLIAM BROWN, Non Executive Chair of Ninebanks PLC, tall, well spoken, suit and tie, early 60's, patrician.

William is reading the FT and listening to a news bulletin on Radio 4. The bulletin mentions a new 'appointment' being made for a significant role, which clearly irritates Sir William.

WILLIAM

Turn that off Samar

SAMAR, the smartly dressed, Asian driver dutifully turns off the radio.

Once the car stops, William puts away his reading glasses while he waits for Samar to open door and pass him his briefcase from front passenger seat. William takes the briefcase, and carefully puts on his coat, without looking at Samar.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Thanks Samar. Usual time this evening.

Sir William strides towards Ninebanks entrance.

4B INT. LIFT - NINEBANKS - DAY 4B
Jane ascends the lift to the top floor of Ninebanks

4C INT. OUTSIDE BOARDROOM - NINEBANKS - DAY 4C
Jane exits lift, is greeted by Kat. *

KAT *

Good morning Miss Perrin. This way *

please. *

Jane smiles and nods in response. Kat shows Jane into the boardroom. *

4D INT. BOARDROOM - NINEBANKS - DAY 4D

ALAN GOWER, CEO of Ninebanks, medium build, short hair, shirt sleeves but wearing a tie, Edinburgh or regional accent, exuding energy, fiftyish, is stood working on his phone while standing looking out of the view of London from the boardroom windows. *

When Jane enters the room, Alan turns and walks towards Jane. They shake hands. *

ALAN

Jane, hi, good to see you again.
Congratulations on your appointment
and welcome to Ninebanks.

JANE

Thank you Alan, I'm very pleased to
be here.

Jane puts her bag down and goes to sit at the boardroom table. *

ALAN

Er...I wouldn't sit there.

Jane looks at him quizzically

ALAN (CONT'D)

Sir William's seat. He's, er, quite
particular. Old school, you know.

Jane moves seat without comment while Alan also takes his own seat *

ALAN (CONT'D)

But very good, really very good.
Very supportive.

JANE

I'm sure he is. He did recruit you
to lead the turnaround of
Ninebanks.

*
*
*

ALAN

Yes, well, something like that.

*

JANE

How's it going?

ALAN

OK. I've been here over two years
now and it's tough going but we're
making progress.

*
*
*

JANE

Only not as quickly as you, or the
markets would like? Or Sir William?

*

ALAN

That's his job. He has a very clear
vision of the future of Ninebanks
and how fast he wants to get there.
But I'm sure he'll tell you about
that himself, if he hasn't already.

*

Enter JOHN MILLER, CFO, diffident, prematurely aged, suit and
tie, looks round the door.

*

ALAN (CONT'D)

Sorry John, going to be a little
late for our meeting. I'll come and
find you.

*

John nods and exits with a rueful but accepting look.

ALAN (CONT'D)

That was our CFO, John Miller by
the way.

JANE

Oh yes? I'm due to see him after
this meeting. Looks like I might be
a bit late too.

*
*

ALAN

I wouldn't worry about it...[BEAT]
Anyway what about you?

*
*

(MORE)

ALAN (CONT'D)

I'm curious about what brings someone like you here? Former international equestrian, Oxford, Harvard, First female MD at Grand Brand. Then walked away from it all..

*
*
*
*
*

JANE

Yes.

ALAN

When I asked you about that last time you said it wasn't about family, it was just time for a change. You didn't say why though?

*
*
*

JANE

I wanted a portfolio career that I was in control of. I liked the idea of being an independent voice in more than one company. I want to be at the top tables. I make no apology for that..

*
*

Reaction on Alan as he thinks "that is a bit different".

*

4E

INT. OUTSIDE BOARDROOM - NINEBANKS - DAY

4E

Sir William emerges from the lift. Kat is there to intercept him as he leaves the lift and takes his coat and briefcase. He walks towards the boardroom door and enters.

*
*
*

4F

INT. BOARDROOM - NINEBANKS - DAY

4F

When Sir William enters, he sees Jane and Alan standing at his 'trophy' cabinet in the boardroom, looking at his mementos. Jane is studying one in particular which she is holding in her hands.

*
*
*
*

WILLIAM

Ah. Good morning Jane, nice to see you again, and good morning Alan.

*

JANE

Good morning. We were just admiring your awards.

*

WILLIAM

Ah. My little trophy cabinet. Forgive me. Alan gets bored with my war stories.

Sir William puts his hand out to take the award back from Jane. He places it back 'correctly' in the cabinet as Jane speaks. *

JANE

Very interesting, actually. Tells a tale.

WILLIAM

Yes, well. Some of those are pretty ancient now - go back to when the City really was the City you know. (Self deprecating laugh) I like to think it's a career still progressing though you know. *

JANE

(Coolly)

A distinguished career. And a well deserved knighthood I'm sure *

Moment's silence. William looks appraisingly at Jane who looks away. Alan looks from one to the other sensing the tension.

ALAN

Jane and I have already said hello, Sir William. So shall we start? *

All return to seats, Sir William pointedly taking "his seat" *

WILLIAM

So let me formally welcome you to Ninebanks, Jane. We old hands look forward to you bringing a bit of youth and vigour to the Board.

JANE

I'd like to think I can bring a bit more than that actually William *

WILLIAM

Yes, well...good to have someone fresh on board, and a lady to boot.....

Alan realises he needs to interrupt and hurriedly interjects

ALAN

I'm sure Jane will bring a great deal to the party. Starting at Leadgate... *

WILLIAM

Yes. You see, Jane, there is something we would like you to go and look at. A little bit unusual for a non-exec but we think you might fit the bill.

*

ALAN

And a good introduction for you as well.

JANE

Even before I've attended my first board meeting? [Quizzical look].
Go on.

Alan gets up and points towards an Organigram of the Ninebanks portfolio of businesses. As he talks through the next section, he highlights an Engineering Coatings business called Leadgates which is shown as a branch on the diagram.

*
*
*
*

ALAN

We have a business unit called Leadgate. It's primarily an engineering coatings business but it's also responsible for the run down of our various legacy liabilities.

*
*

WILLIAM

Bit of a millstone round our necks, actually. Gets in the way of our change programme which Alan is, or should be, focussed on.

*

ALAN

It's based near Manchester, run by a guy called Richard Moss, who, I have worked with before. Some of the basics of the business are quite good, brand loyalty, and an innovative track record.

*
*
*
*

JANE

Not recently.

*

ALAN

You saw that? They put a lot of faith and investment into a fancy new spray device. Only to find that customers didn't want to pay for it. Wrote off a lot of costs last year.

*

JANE

Poor customer data?

*

ALAN

Possibly. Or a bit blinded by the need to just produce something new. It's all a bit tired, in all honesty. The people...

WILLIAM

Have been there too long. If I had my way they'd have been out the door long ago.

ALAN

(Thoughtful)

I really don't know why Richard hasn't dealt with that.

JANE

First half results looked ok. From the outside.

*

ALAN

Better than expected. But if something looks too good to be true, it probably is. And I do know Richard, I suspect there may be a little creative accounting in there.

*

*

*

JANE

Send internal audit in if you're worried.

WILLIAM

We will, in due course, but there are some other things. First, we've received an anonymous call via our Speak Up hotline alleging that to save money Moss has wrongly stopped some environmental testing.

*

*

ALAN

He does need to save some costs, to be fair.

WILLIAM

It also says that he's bullying his reports to hit impossible targets. And there's a suggestion of some other funny stuff.

*

*

*

William gestures to Alan to pick up the tale.

ALAN

A woman sales executive recently resigned, with a pretty emotional letter. To his credit, Richard has agreed that the allegations made against him should be independently investigated. I suspect under pressure from his FD, a feisty woman called Susan Alogosa. Worth talking to.

*

*

JANE

So, you want me to go and openly investigate the letter, and quietly investigate the Speak Up claims at the same time? Welcome to Ninebanks!

WILLIAM

An unusual start, perhaps. But it's not the job of the non-exec to win popularity contests, you know. I think you may find that joining the Board at Ninebanks is a bit of a step up from your previous roles, if you don't mind me saying so.

Patronising laugh

Scathing look at William from Jane and for a moment they lock eyes

ALAN

There's more. Richard is under pressure from me to deliver. To my surprise, he isn't. I'd like you to take the temperature of the business, give us a view.

*

JANE

(Thoughtful)

I'll need to do some homework

ALAN

Of course. But don't be too long. You're a fresh pair of eyes, but that doesn't last forever. Also, you should know... I'm going to have to do something if the year end results don't come through.

*

*

ALAN (CONT'D)

Like fire Richard. Sell the business. Or both.

*

*

Jane nods, looks at watch.

JANE

I must go, meeting John Miller,
more introductions.. I'll let you
know when I'm going to Leadgate.

*

ALAN

Oh you're meeting John? Be
interested in your view once you've
spent some time with him.

JANE

Really? Not concerned about your
CFO as well are you?

Sir William frowns and gestures impatiently. Alan hurries to
speak

ALAN

No, no nothing like that. Just
interested in your view while
you're still that fresh pair of
eyes.

*

Jane holds his eye for a second then exits

ALAN (CONT'D)

Interesting appointment Sir
William. A different approach.

*

WILLIAM

Don't be a fool Alan. It's called
Diversity. She can play about with
Leadgate while you get on with
Project Bertrand. And do get on
with it please Alan...

*

*

*

5 INT. NINEBANKS - BOARDROOM / RICHARD'S OFFICE - INTERCUT DAY

*

A little later.

*

ALAN pacing at end of the Ninebanks Boardroom next to small
table, on phone.

*

*

ALAN

Richard, morning, got a moment?
Just a quick one...?

*

*

*

Cut to Richard sitting in office at Leadgate

*

RICHARD
Morning Alan, what can I do for
you?

ALAN
Just wanted to give you a heads up.
You'll shortly be getting a visit
from our newest non-exec director,
lady called Jane Perrin.

RICHARD
So I understand.

ALAN
She's coming to talk to you about
the lady who resigned, on the face
of it anyway. But be under no
illusions, she'll be having a look
at Leadgate generally.

Richard stands and begins to pace in his office.

RICHARD
Oh. I see.

ALAN
So take it seriously, no bloody
surprises please. Just give her
what she needs.

RICHARD
Of course Alan.

ALAN
I want her to come back here and
report to Sir William and me that
you are driving ahead with the
transformation of Leadgate and
there's nothing else to see, ok?

RICHARD
Got it. You can count on me.

ALAN
Can I Richard? Not much evidence
from where I'm sitting.

RICHARD
Alan, I'm on it. You know I'll
deliver.

ALAN
And Richard, so you know, she's Sir
William's appointment.
(MORE)

ALAN (CONT'D)

He thinks she'll be a patsy. I'm pretty sure she won't be. So keep the little boy charm under wraps, ok?

*
*
*
*

RICHARD

Strictly business Alan.

*
*

ALAN

It had better be Richard.

*
*

Alan rings off leaving Richard looking pensively at his phone.

*
*

6

INT. RICHARD'S OFFICE - LEADGATE - DAY

6

Present are Richard, Susan and DAVID BLACKETT, Leadgate environmental manager. Richard, sitting at desk, relaxed, checking phone occasionally, Susan seated and alert, David, tall, greying, bespectacled, tweed jacket, agitated, is standing.

*
*
*
*
*

DAVID

What do you mean, released a few environmental provisions?

*

RICHARD

Relax David, sit down.

*

David sits, uncomfortably, glaring at Susan

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Susan, would you like to explain?

*
*

SUSAN

Following the discussions about stopping the testing...

DAVID

Which I did not agree with...

SUSAN

To which you were certainly party...we decided we could take a view on certain of those provisions.

*

DAVID

Without asking me? I'm the environmental manager, or at least I was when I walked in here.

*

*

RICHARD

Sorry David, we definitely discussed this, and I reported to Head Office on that basis. You said that the absolute gold standard was to test forever, but given our good track record - entirely down to your stewardship - and our need for cost savings, it would be acceptable to go to occasional sampling.

*
*
*

DAVID

I didn't say that at all, nothing like. I said the only safe thing to do was to continue testing. You told me to go to occasional sampling, for which, incidentally, there is no budget.

*

RICHARD

David, I'm honestly really surprised. I thought you were fine with it.

*
*
*

SUSAN

There are some emails that would confirm that David.

*
*

DAVID

I'm sure there are. I'm sure there bloody are. And I'm sure they support what you say. But don't try and tell me I agreed with it. And don't put words in my mouth that I never said!

*

David rises in anger and leaves the room.

Richard and Susan look at each other in concern

*

SUSAN

He said nothing of the sort.

RICHARD

He thinks he did. Or maybe he didn't say anything. Sometimes you have to listen for what people don't say. I learned that in my marriage...and my divorce.

*
*

SUSAN

I don't deal in meaningful silences. He agreed to stop testing.

RICHARD

People remember things in different ways Susan.

*
*

Thoughtful silence.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

I'll give it a day or two and then have a word with him.

*

Looks up, rueful smile.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

In the meantime, this woman Jane Perrin is coming to see me tomorrow, to haul me over the coals about Holly's departure, and to take a general look at my suitability for office if I'm not mistaken.

*

SUSAN

You'd better turn on the charm, like you can then. She wants to see me too. Shall we see her together?

*
*

RICHARD

No, best if we see her separately, and just be honest. Tell her about the provisions, the rebates, the pressure we are under and what we are trying to do, and I'll do the same. But no forward promises.

*

SUSAN

She's bound to ask about year end.

*

RICHARD

Just tell her it's tough, that we are putting together a plan and that we've cut all discretionary spend.

*
*

SUSAN

We haven't.

RICHARD

We have now. Get an announcement out. No one spends anything without my, or your, say so.

SUSAN

Not before time. *

RICHARD

And, probably best if we keep her away from David until I've had a word.... *

7A INT. OFFICE FLOOR - LEADGATE - DAY 7A *

Shot of Jane being escorted by Emily through the Leadgate offices towards the Boardroom. As she passes by Susan's office, Susan and Jane make eye contact through the window for a moment as Susan briefly attempts to 'study' this new visitor, before Jane moves on. *

7B INT. BOARDROOM - LEADGATE - DAY 7B *

Jane enters the boardroom. There are warm introductions between Richard and Jane

8 INT. BOARDROOM - LEADGATE - DAY 8 *

Time has passed a few minutes. There are some charts on a Powerpoint slide on the screen left from their earlier discussion. *

Richard and Jane are sat together in mid-conversation at the conference room table, with relaxed body language and the occasional smile between them. They are getting on. *

JANE

So, let's come onto the exec who resigned, Holly Thomas, the one who wrote the letter. *

RICHARD

Yes, Susan and I agreed we should refer it for independent review. Wasn't quite expecting someone like you though! *

RICHARD smiles

JANE

Your side of the story?

RICHARD

She's good Holly, been consistently good over the years, I'm told. But her team haven't been performing recently. I think they need shaking up, Holly didn't. I think a lot of things need shaking up.

*

*

JANE

Go on

RICHARD

This isn't anything I haven't told Alan. We have a layer of management that has been in the business for years,, lots of received wisdom, highly resistant to change.

*

JANE

And Holly was one such?

RICHARD

Actually, no. I saw her as part of the solution, probably why I was putting her under pressure. But she was too loyal to her team and they wouldn't shift. It was pretty robust series of exchanges, needed to be, but it damaged our relationship.. I said that if she wouldn't change it, I might have to change it for her.

*

*

*

*

*

JANE

So she felt threatened?

RICHARD

I wouldn't have said so, but maybe I'm wrong. If this business is to survive I need a team of winners.

*

*

Jane nods, approvingly. As if you and I, we're big guys, we understand these things

*

RICHARD (CONT'D)

The thing is, I like her, had a really good relationship with her at one time. At the end of our last meeting, it all got a bit tense, so I tried to, well, put my arm around her. It was only a gesture, but she didn't like it. She was a bit upset.

*

*

JANE

Upset! I'll bet she was.

*

RICHARD

It was only a gesture, no more. But she might have seen it differently.

*

JANE

(Drily)

I think she probably did, judging by her letter.. Anything else?

*

*

*

RICHARD

Not really. When you talk to Susan she might say I'm too tactile with women, a bit too familiar, but that's just me. Part of my edge.

*

*

JANE

Are you sorry she resigned?

RICHARD

Yes and no, honestly. I like her and I'm sure she's feeling terrible. But in a way it's a chance for me to get at that team. And..you know she's pregnant?

JANE

I did not.(Unsympathetic) That was another problem looming for you, then? I'll have to speak to her you know. If she'll talk to me that is?

*

*

RICHARD

Of course, that's fine. Give her my best. Genuinely. I just wish she'd talk to me.

JANE

(Casually)

Richard, do you know we've had a Speak Up complaint about Leadgate?

*

*

RICHARD

No. No I didn't? What about? .

JANE

The gist is that Leadgate, specifically you, have been bullying your people...

RICHARD

Me? Bullying?

*

JANE

One says that you ordered crucial environmental testing to stop in order to save costs. And there's a general suggestion of a laddish culture. Maybe even sexist.

*
*

RICHARD

(Tense)

And I suppose they also mention my alcoholism and gambling habit?

*
*
*

JANE

(Coolly)

Not yet, but if you want to tell me about them I'll listen.

RICHARD

Sorry, sorry, that was...

*

Richard sits back, runs fingers through hair and thinks for a moment

*

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Look I think I've covered the harassment piece from my point of view, but you will want to speak to others I'm sure, and that's fine. As to the accounting, we had a rough year last year and I've been driving hard for a much better year this year.

*

*

JANE

I didn't mention the accounting.

*

RICHARD

No, no you didn't. Look you need to talk to Susan, but we didn't do anything that wouldn't pass muster with audit, all within acceptable limits. I didn't bully anyone.

*

JANE

(Calmly, and with some empathy)

I'm not on a witch hunt Richard, it's difficult for you I can see.

RICHARD

I know, I know. It's your job. Welcome to Leadgate.

JANE

Welcome to Ninebanks actually. And, just to finish, the environmentalists? What's the name of your environmental manager, David Blackett? I'll need to speak to him.

RICHARD

Of course, although I don't think he's around today. He didn't make the complaint did he?

*

JANE

I don't know. And I wouldn't tell you if I did.

Pause. Richard sighs

RICHARD

The environmentalists... This may take some time, let's get a coffee and I'll walk you through it...

9

INT. BOARDROOM - NINEBANKS - DAY

9

*

Same conference room at Ninebanks as Scene 3. Present Alan, William, Aloof, and Jane, all seated at conference table, in conversation

JANE

I was actually quite impressed

ALAN

Yes, he's a good operator. So why isn't he delivering, Jane?

JANE

The business is under huge pressure, much more than you realise when you sit here - that's the usual curse of a head office - but it gives the impression of being quite well run.

ALAN

Not profitable though. And I do understand the pressure Jane.

*

JANE

Do you? No, it's not profitable, but he has plans including a difficult culture shift. I spoke to Susan, the FD, also very much on top of her brief. She shares his view about the need for change, possibly even more robustly. And she knew exactly what she'd done to bolster the Q1 results, and why. She was very frank, and very open.

*
*

Enter Kat carrying tray of china cups, tea and coffee, which she places on table to one side.

*

WILLIAM

Ah, good morning Kat, coffee for me please, and for Alan I suspect. Jane?

JANE

Tea, no milk.

Kat pours drinks and serves drinks. Jane takes hers without acknowledgement. William gives her a faintly contemptuous look that says, no class.

WILLIAM

Thank you very much Kat, great timing as always.

ALAN

Yes, thanks Kat.

Pause, before William resumes.

WILLIAM

So you think it's all ok? The financials, I mean.

JANE

It's nothing that hasn't been done before, put it that way. Our CFO, John was OK with it. And it's not hidden. Audit passed it too.

*
*
*

WILLIAM

Well they would, wouldn't they? Anything to protect the consultancy fees. But a bit too clever?

*
*

JANE

Maybe. But in a business under pressure, understandable.

(MORE)

JANE (CONT'D)

And it's a trick you can only pull once. It won't save the year end numbers.

ALAN

No, we have to hope that the underlying trading performance improves for that. I'm not optimistic. Good intentions are all very well but fine words butter no parsnips.

WILLIAM

Well, that's one thing off the slate anyway. And did you touch on the other matters? Not that I suppose there's much in them.

Jane pushes chair back, stands and paces around the room thoughtfully

*

JANE

I did...He said that he's sometimes been told off by Susan for being too tactile, and my guess is that's an understatement. But Susan wouldn't commit to saying he'd sexually harassed anybody. Doesn't mean it hasn't happened, but Richard doesn't think so. He was genuinely shocked at the allegation of bullying as well.

*

*

*

*

ALAN

OK, but what did you think?

JANE

There will be people who've felt bullied but Richard won't see it. People perceive things differently; you don't need to look too far for examples of hard driving CEO's who've ended up exceeding the speed limits .

*

WILLIAM

What about the woman who resigned?

*

JANE

Holly Thomas? She wouldn't meet, but we spoke on the phone. She said she absolutely did not want to pursue a complaint against Richard, or anyone in the business.

*

*

(MORE)

JANE (CONT'D)

She won't make a claim, regrets the way she left but it was her decision.

*

WILLIAM

That's a bit odd isn't it? Got a bit emotional and regrets it?

ALAN

It's that kind of business. Part of the problem, and its strength, is that the people have all been there forever. And their parents before them.

*

JANE

That is exactly how it feels.

WILLIAM

(Haughty)

Beyond my ken, I'm afraid. So nothing to see then Jane?

*

*

JANE

I wouldn't say that, no. I think we need to take a closer interest in what's happening. There may be no fire, but there is some smoke. Let's come onto the environmentals.

*

*

*

ALAN

Yes, Richard brought it to the Ninebanks Exec.

*

JANE

He did, and on the face of it, it's fine. They've been testing for leaks from these old tips for decades. They were all nicely covered over, and some have been partially built on.

*

ALAN

Yes, they report to the Exec every year.

JANE

They did. I believe it's a bit more ad hoc now. There was quite a debate in the business about stopping the testing. In their minds it's pure sunk cost, no benefit.

*

*

*

*

*

(MORE)

JANE (CONT'D)

So they took a view, supported by their environmental guy, who I spoke to by phone, that they should stop it.

*
*
*

ALAN

Which the Exec signed off.

*
*

JANE

And then in the first half numbers they released some fairly size-able provisions.

*
*
*
*

WILLIAM

Convenient.

*
*

JANE

But not necessarily unreasonable.

*

WILLIAM

So no further action required, complaint properly investigated. Excellent! Move on.

JANE

Not quite. Somebody felt strongly enough to call in. And there is quite a bit of smoke when you put it all together...

WILLIAM

I think we've done enough for now.

ALAN

We'll need a good story about those environmentals when we sell it...maybe I should have a friendly word with Richard...

*
*

WILLIAM

Yes, Alan, I think you should, and not so friendly at that. I don't want this, or any other irrelevancies impacting on Project Bertrand. Just make sure, ok.

JANE

You think this is irrelevant? Then why did you ask me to look into it?

*
*

William looks at Jane with irritation, Alan appraisingly and with a little concern. There's a moments tension before Jane continues.

*

JANE (CONT'D)

What's Project Bertrand?

WILLIAM

(Puffed up, proud)

It's a worldwide acquisition in our consumer healthcare business which I am going to announce later this year. Complete gamechanger. Nothing derails Project Bertrand.

*
*

ALAN

Long way to get it over the line still Sir William.

*
*

WILLIAM

Come on Alan. You are on the team aren't you? I'm looking forward to personally ramming Bertrand down the throats of those bloody analysts who say I've failed to grow this company. Nothing derails Project Bertrand Alan. You hear me?

*
*
*
*
*
*
*
*

Sir William exits, leaving this very clear message hanging in the air.

*
*

JANE

Supportive you said? Pretty pushy too.

*
*
*

ALAN

Well like I also said - he knows what he wants.[BEAT] Look Jane, can I offer you some advice? I know your role here is to be independent, but from my experience, if you get too independent with Sir William you can easily end up outside the tent. And if you're not in the tent you're no use to anyone. So be independent - yes - but still part of the team you know - not too independent...

*
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*

Jane looks back at Alan with an expression of understanding and reflection.

*
*

She then look towards the boardroom door where Sir William exited, with a dawning realization that Sir William may have set her up.

*
*
*

10

INT. RICHARD'S OFFICE - LEADGATE - DAY

10 *

Richards office, seated at Richard's desk, Richard and David.
Richard in conciliatory pose, David tense and determined.

DAVID

Yes, she called me.

RICHARD

What did you say.

DAVID

(Angrily)

I gave her your version of the truth, Richard, like the good team player I am. Unfortunately for me, it's not my version.

RICHARD

Meaning?

DAVID

Meaning that I told her we had many discussions about it and eventually it was decided that the testing should stop. I didn't tell her that I had spoken out against it and that you hadn't listened.

RICHARD

(Mollifying)

We have different memories of that, David.

*

DAVID

Damn right we do, but it's yours that counts and I'm shafted as a result.

RICHARD

It's my job to turn this business around and that's what I'm doing! And I did listen to you, and you agreed to stop testing.

*

DAVID

I did not! You just drove through me, like you do with everyone. And now I've lied to a director.

*

*

RICHARD

I don't think you have David.

DAVID

Yes I bloody have, I know it and
you know it, and for year end
you'll release some more to make
your precious profits until one day
something will happen and we'll all
be screwed.

*

David buries his head in his hands. Silence for a moment,
then looks up directly at Richard. Eyes lock.

*

*

DAVID (CONT'D)

There's something you don't know.
Remember I mentioned a gas called
HUFC?

*

*

*

*

RICHARD

Vaguely.

*

*

Richard waits, eyes still locked on David

DAVID

Cancel your next meeting. We're
going for a drive.

*

*

11A EXT. MODERN HOUSING ESTATE - DAY

11A

*

David and Richard in a car driving round the estate we saw in
Scene 1. Pulls up and stops outside Holly's house.

11B INT/EXT. DAVID'S CAR - MODERN HOUSING ESTATE - DAY

11B

*

DAVID

Know whose house that is?

*

Richard nods, but says nothing.

*

DAVID (CONT'D)

Holly Thomas's house. Well I asked
her and three other people I know
if I could leave some basic testing
equipment in confined areas in
their properties.

*

*

*

*

RICHARD

All on your own? Nobody else knows
about this?

*

*

DAVID

All my own work. Obviously, the
folk involved know I'm looking for
something but they don't know what.

(MORE)

DAVID (CONT'D)

The funny thing is, our formal testing wouldn't have found this, because we were looking in the wrong place. I wasn't convinced myself that I would find anything - and for a while the results were inconclusive, but this week's numbers are all too clear I'm afraid - it's there alright. And in more than trace quantities.

*
*
*
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*
*

RICHARD

You're telling me toxic gas is leaking from one of our sites into people's houses? Into Holly's house?

*
*
*
*
*

DAVID looks at RICHARD saying nothing.

*

RICHARD (CONT'D)

And how many more?

*

DAVID

I have no idea.

*

12

EXT. OUTSIDE NINEBANKS / SUSAN'S OFFICE - LEADGATE / INTERCUT
- EVENING

*
*

Jane, walking out of Ninebanks offices, stops to take call, on her mobile. Susan's is alone in her office.

*

SUSAN

Sorry to call you at this time, but you did say...

*
*

JANE

It's fine Susan, what can I do for you?

SUSAN

So, this is off the record?

*
*

JANE

Depends what it's about. I'll certainly treat anything you tell me with discretion.

*

SUSAN

It's about Leadgate. But I can't talk on the record.

*
*

JANE

Look, tell me about it. I'll be as discreet as possible.

SUSAN

OK. I'll have to think about it.

Rings off, leaving Jane looking perplexed at her phone

13

INT. BOARDROOM - LEADGATE - DAY

13

Richard stood at head of conference table, with David sat near him. Susan enters, followed shortly behind by GRACE THOMPSON, late thirties, smartly dressed, petite, detached manner, carrying a coffee cup. They settle into their seats as Richard begins his briefing.

RICHARD

You'll be wondering why I've pulled you in at such short notice, and why I've asked for legal input, [gestures at Grace]. We've got a serious matter to address. Over to you David. Tell it how you see it.

Richard takes his seat.

DAVID

I will. Glad to be able to actually. Grace, you don't know this, but I was very much against the abandonment of the environmental testing last year. Richard and Susan remember it differently, and I'm beginning to wonder what I said myself.

Susan looks questioningly at Richard, who doesn't react. Grace opens notepad and begins to write

RICHARD

No notes, please, Grace.

Grace, perplexed and prim, puts pen down.

DAVID

So the testing stopped. Well, nearly stopped.

RICHARD

As it turns out, David had a bit of a solo project going on.

DAVID
Can I explain?

*

David stands as he looks to own 'his moment'.

*

DAVID (CONT'D)
First let's talk about HUFC. HUFC
is a rare odourless gas. Generally
harmless. However, in
concentration, there are studies on
animals that suggest a link to
cancers and possible birth
defects... But nothing conclusive.
With me so far?

*

*

*

*

*

*

GRACE
Can I just...

*

DAVID interrupts before GRACE can ask her question.

*

David moves to screen which shows a map of quarry, limestone
spur and LGE. He points to detail of map.

*

*

DAVID
Now this red area is Ropslot -
originally a sandstone quarry
before we began dumping waste into
it back in the 50s. And this blue
area here is a sandstone spur to
the north. Lime Glade Estate
housing estate is built on this
sandstone spur.

*

*

*

*

*

*

*

*

*

GRACE
But none of that is our land,
right?

*

DAVID
The red area, the old quarry is..

*

GRACE
Can I have a copy of the map?

*

RICHARD
Just listen will you.

*

DAVID
Now towards the end of the testing,
quite by accident, we found some
traces of HUFC. I reported it but
nobody really took much notice.

*

*

*

*

So I did some research.
(MORE)

*

DAVID (CONT'D)

From such records as I could find,
it appears the quarry was filled
with refrigeration lubricants that
were dumped at the north end, the
Lime Glade Estate end.

*
*
*
*
*

GRACE

But presumably all done in a
legally correct manner?

*

DAVID

Oh yes, all done in accordance with
the best practice of the time. I
don't think there was a lot of
regulation back then, but all done
properly, nicely topped off with
clay, and landscaped. And It's
actually worked pretty well.

*
*

*
*

GRACE

I'm sorry, then where is this all
going?

*
*

RICHARD

Get on with it David.

*

David stops for a moment, and looks around the table, almost
enjoying the moment. He has their undivided attention. Points
to map.

DAVID

(Still pointing to map)
Well natural breakdown of the
lubricants that were being dumped
at the North end of the quarry here
can give rise to HUFC. And as I
said earlier, Lime Glade Estate is
built on sandstone. Gases like HUFC
can permeate sandstone.

*

*
*
*
*
*
*

Pause. David looks around the table. It's his big moment

DAVID (CONT'D)

So "where this is all going" Grace
is I started to think there was a
real possibility that HUFC could be
present in residential housing.

*
*
*
*

Pause

GRACE

That's a ridiculous conclusion
David. You couldn't know that.

*
*

DAVID

You're right Grace, I couldn't. So with no further testing allowed I did some work on my own. Richard thinks I went rogue, and maybe he's right. And maybe it'll mean the end of my career...[Pauses] Sorry this is quite difficult for me.

*
*
*
*
*

GRACE gives DAVID 'a look'

*

DAVID (CONT'D)

Grace, I may have been misguided, and I may not have made myself heard properly, but I'm loyal, to the business and my colleagues - and I couldn't just ignore the fact that people might be at risk. So I put some measuring kit in the houses of four people I know on Lime Glade Estate. And HUFC is there.

*
*
*
*
*
*
*
*

Silence round the table, Grace sits back and folds arms.
Richard looks at ceiling

SUSAN

But there's no official testing as yet?

*
*

David nods

GRACE

Anybody else know about this?

*
*

DAVID

Just we four, currently.

GRACE

If we accept what you've said, how many houses might be affected?

*
*

DAVID

I don't know Grace. Could be only a few, could be a lot. There are about 300 houses in total on the estate.

*
*
*
*

RICHARD

300? They can't all be affected?

*

DAVID

Probably not. But they could be...
And the people in them.

GRACE

Any reports of increased incidence of cancer? Birth defects? I guess we would have heard if there were.

*
*

DAVID

I think that's right, but I wouldn't know how to ask the question.. You could easily create absolute panic.

*

GRACE

Yes. You could.

*

SUSAN

So what do you think we should say?

GRACE

Say? About what? What would you say? We're not quite sure but there might be a gas in your house which might cause cancer, which might be generated from material that we might have put in a quarry sixty years ago? The claims would be piling up on my desk in days.

*
*
*
*

RICHARD

What would people claim for?

GRACE

Loss of property value, loss of facility, loss of fertility. Anything they can claim might be connected to the gas, which given how little what we know, could be anything.

*
*
*
*
*

RICHARD

Property....bloody hell. I suppose if they became unsaleable....

*

SUSAN

But if we say nothing, don't we make it worse?

GRACE

If we say anything we make it worse. And we don't have any verified facts.

DAVID

Our usual position is complete transparency with our neighbours.

(MORE)

DAVID (CONT'D)

But in this case we don't yet have anything to say. The problem is, we will have to find a way to verify my work without scaring everyone, which means we need a plan before we say anything.

GRACE

Obviously.

RICHARD

OK here's what I want. David, chapter and verse on how much gas you've found, how many houses its likely to be in, and a risk assessment. As many facts as possible. Grace, I want to know our potential liability, realistically, and our insurance position. Susan, I want you to talk to comms, hypothetically, and work out how we might communicate, bearing in mind this could become stock exchange sensitive. All for the exec on Wednesday.

GRACE

I assume you'll want me at the Exec Richard?

RICHARD

You and David yes - for this agenda item only. Susan will let you know timings.

GRACE tries to hide her disappointment - she thought this would be her chance to finally join the Exec.

GRACE

In the meantime, should we have a word about some of the other aspects of this?

Looks across at David with inward hostility. David looks back and shrugs. Grace thinks she matters. But everyone knows she doesn't.

RICHARD

I don't think that will be necessary Grace. Just do as I ask please

Grace purses lips, nods uncomfortably and looks away as Richard holds her gaze.

SUSAN

Full year results coming up
Richard.

RICHARD

I'm well aware Susan.

SUSAN

What do we say to head office?

RICHARD

At this stage we don't say anything
to anyone.

GRACE

I'll need to talk to our insurers
Richard...legally...

RICHARD

No-one talks to anyone until I say
so. Got it?

RICHARD looks around the table. SUSAN, DAVID, and GRACE then
rise from the table

SUSAN

David? The people whose houses you
tested. They expecting any
feedback?

DAVID

Not yet.

SUSAN

Anyone we know?

DAVID

(Glances at Richard, then
back to Susan)
Yes. Holly Thomas.....

All rise and leave room apart from Richard, left in a
solitary reflective moment. He picks up his phone, and
navigates to the 'Holly Thomas' contact on his phone, which
shows a smiling photo of her. He pauses for a moment,
considering whether to call her.

He stands and walks towards the windows of the boardroom,
looking out as he continues to consider what to do. His
thumb hovers over the call button for a moment before he
sighs and closes the contact screen. We are left on Richard
in a solitary moment of doubt and shame.

14 INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY 14 *

A waiter comes over to the table where Jane is sat reading something on her iPad. The waiter, COFFEE SHOP #1, is carrying a tray with a cup and a small teapot containing hot water. *

COFFEE SHOP #1 *

Your hot water madam. *

JANE *

Thank you. *

Jane gets a herbal tea bag from her handbag, places it in the cup, and begins to pour the hot water from the teapot into the cup. *

At this moment, Holly arrives through the door, scans the coffee shop for a moment, notices who she thinks is Jane, and walks over to the table. *

HOLLY *

Ms Perrin? *

JANE *

Yes. Holly? Please sit down. *

Holly sits down, as the waiter from earlier passes back by the table. *

COFFEE SHOP #1 *

Can I get you anything madam? *

HOLLY *

Just a cappuccino please. *

JANE

Thanks for meeting me - appreciate it's difficult for you.

HOLLY

(Smiles)

You were very persistent. I wondered why?

JANE

(Rueful)

My introduction to Ninebanks has been interesting. I was asked to look at some things in Leadgate that, taken together, were beginning to cause concern. I've talked to quite a few people. *

(MORE) *

JANE (CONT'D)

This is my second visit, informal
this time.

HOLLY

Have you spoken to Richard?

JANE

Yes, I have.

HOLLY

Well I'm not sure I'll have
anything very much to add but go
ahead. But be warned, I'm not going
to throw Richard under a bus if
that's what you're looking for.

JANE

No, that's not what we want at all.
Ninebanks put him in to do a
difficult job, and we want Richard
to succeed.

*

*

HOLLY

What then....?

JANE

There have been a series of flags
raised, but I'm having difficulty
finding any substance...

HOLLY

Look, Richard is a charismatic CEO
put in by Alan Gower to do a
difficult job. Leadgate is a sound,
business in a competitive
environment. Alan drives Richard
hard and Richard drives his people
hard.

*

*

*

*

*

JANE

Did he drive you too hard?

Holly sits up and back, and looks directly at Jane with
strong eye contact. She has some substance and self
confidence.

*

*

*

This moment of eye contact is broken by the waiter returning
with Holly's Cappuccino.

*

*

HOLLY

(To waiter) Thanks. (To Jane)
Listen, Richard's like a lot of
driven men. He can't bear the
thought of failure.

*

*

*

*

*

(MORE)

HOLLY (CONT'D)

So he may appear empathetic, but
only to get what he wants. He makes
you feel like you're his guy, so
you don't dare let him down.

*
*

JANE

That's called soft bullying Holly.

*

HOLLY

Not in my case. I understood
that. And everyone knows he likes
the attention of women. Men like
him do. Have you seen any
complaints?

*
*

JANE

Did you make a complaint?

*

HOLLY

(Laughs suddenly and
unexpectedly)

No, not me. I wrote a silly letter
of resignation, but you know that.

*
*
*
*

JANE

So why did you resign Holly?

*

HOLLY

That's personal, Jane [BEAT] So?

*

JANE

No, there haven't been any direct
complaints.

*

HOLLY

(Laughs again)

Oh yes there have. Look hard enough
in head office and you'll find them
buried somewhere.

*
*
*

A BEAT as Holly takes a sip of her coffee.

*

HOLLY (CONT'D)

Anything else?

*
*

JANE

Just a couple of questions about
sales.

*

HOLLY

I'm sure you've got all the
figures.

JANE

Yes, but there were some clever things done at the end of the first half.

*
*

HOLLY

Ask Susan about that. She's Richards go to girl.

*

JANE

Your view?

HOLLY

Sales weren't great and we had some new product disappointments which didn't help. Margins were the problem really. That's why I suddenly wasn't Richards favourite anymore. Because I couldn't get prices up quick enough. When the real problem was that we couldn't get costs down.

*
*
*

Going from being the top girl to off the team completely is...It's hard.

*
*
*

JANE

I see.

HOLLY

At the end of our last meeting, he did his thing, put his arm round me like he does. And suddenly...I just didn't need that any more....

*
*

Pause. A moments silence between them. Jane shifts uncomfortably, emotion is not her thing. Holly smiles, suddenly and relaxes.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

So now you know. Richard is just doing his job his way, that's all.

*
*
*

JANE

Thank you Holly.

*
*

HOLLY

Before I go. I don't suppose there's anything else I need to know?

*
*
*
*

JANE

I don't think so.

*
*

HOLLY

It's just...is there something
going on with the old tip? Some
kind of testing?

JANE

I'm not sure if this is something
that we should be talking about,
but as you've been so helpful...
There's been some debate about
stopping testing, or at least
reducing it, when after all this
time everything seems fine. It's
all been signed off by the
environmental expert.

HOLLY

(unconvinced)

Oh right... that's good then...

JANE

Well if there's anything else
Holly, don't hesitate to call me.
[looks at phone] I better be off.
I'm meeting Susan for a drink.

HOLLY

Ah! My friend Susan...give her my
best will you...

Jane gets up to leave, with the final shots on Holly,
reflecting with concern about the conversation.

15

INT. BAR - NIGHT

15

A bar. Sitting at a table, Susan, with a mostly drunk glass
of wine in front of her. She sips nervously.

The waiter comes over to Susan.

WAITER

Another glass madam?

Susan hesitates for a moment before replying with a nodded
"thank you".

At this moment, Susan clocks that Jane has entered the bar.

They make eye contact, smiling at each other in a rather
perfunctory way as Susan stands up, straightening her outfit,
as Jane walks towards her.

SUSAN *
Hello Jane. *

They shake hands *

JANE *
Susan. *

They both sit as the waiter returns *

WAITER *
Can I get you something madam? *

JANE *
Badoit? *

Before the waiter can respond to say that they don't have it,
Jane jumps in; *

JANE (CONT'D) *
Or Perrier if you don't have Badoit *
- with ice, no lemon. Thank you. *

Off of Susan's look, we cross-fade to a few moments later. *

We follow the waiter carrying Susan's glass of wine and a
bottle of water and two glasses. Susan and Jane are now in
conversation however we can't hear what they are saying until
the waiter moves closer. *

The waiter places the wine and water on the table as Susan
and Jane continue their conversation *

SUSAN *
So you see, it's taken a lot for me
to do this. I felt I had to do
something. *

JANE *
I can see it's difficult for you. *

SUSAN *
I've overcome a lot to get where I
am. In my family, I'm the success
story, the career woman. And I
don't want to lose it all. And I
want the best for the business. And
Richard come to that. *

JANE *
Why didn't you go up the functional
route? *

SUSAN

Have you met John Miller? I thought because you're not part of the old boys club. You're independent, aren't you?

*
*
*
*

JANE

Yes. I am.

SUSAN

So, I want this to be off the record.

*

JANE

And I've told you I'll respect that.

SUSAN

So what will you do?

JANE

Let me recap what you've told me.

*

You're under pressure from Richard to massage the year end results in a way you're unhappy with. This includes releasing some environmental provisions like you did at the half year.

*
*
*
*
*
*

You do know that I spoke to David Blackett and he confirmed that he was happy to let that release go ahead?

*
*
*
*

SUSAN

But he isn't.

JANE

So you now tell me. You also tell me that he won't be happy with the second release but Richard has told you not to mention it to him. Not least because David has been off doing some testing of his own which suggests there might be some invisible gas in some houses that might originate from one of our tips.

*
*
*
*

SUSAN

David is very serious about it.

*

JANE

So I understand. But you've
authorised him to reactivate some
boreholes?

*
*

SUSAN

Yes, but with the testing point on
the tip, not in the houses, and
with no extra money. And to keep it
all to himself.

*
*
*

JANE

On the reasonable grounds that
there is nothing to say until we
have some facts I suppose?

*

SUSAN

On the grounds that we will kick
this into the long grass because
it's too bloody expensive to
contemplate.

*

JANE

If I were Richard I'd want facts
before I acted.

SUSAN

Jane, we aren't going to do
anything, apart from focus on
getting past the year end results!
This stuff is leaking into people's
houses.

*
*

JANE

We don't know that Susan.

*

Pause, while Susan looks defiantly then thoughtfully at Jane

SUSAN

Why are you here Jane? What are
you?

*
*

JANE

I'm a non-Executive Director
charged with bringing independent
thought to Ninebanks. You know
that.

*

SUSAN

Then why are you here? This is
Leadgate, not Ninebanks. Are you
sure you're looking in the right
place?

*
*
*

JANE

I'll look at whatever I need to
Susan.

*

SUSAN

Need to? For whose benefit exactly?

*

Pause, while Jane looks at a defiant Susan with what might be
the beginnings of a little respect. Then moves on...

*

JANE

Anything else?

SUSAN

I assume the harassment matter ran
into the sand?

*

JANE

I've talked to Ms. Thomas this
afternoon. She does not wish any
action to be taken in response to
her letter.

SUSAN

Holly? No. Of course she doesn't.

JANE

Friend of yours?

SUSAN

Not particularly. But there would
be other examples if you dug deep
enough. I think there have been
other complaints, but no action
taken.

*

*

JANE

Richard has had a warning shot. If
there are complaints we'll act on
them

Pause. Both avoid eye contact

*

SUSAN

So what will you do?

*

JANE

Bit difficult given that you want
to remain anonymous. I'll probably
have a further word with Richard.
And I would advise you to stick to
your principles in preparing the
accounts. Good FD's have to be able
to stand up to their CEO.

*

SUSAN
(Bitterly)
And the environmental issue?

JANE
What environmental issue?

They look at each other with mutual distrust. Susan then realizes what she needs to do. She smiles at Jane for a moment.

SUSAN
Right. Thank you Jane. If you don't mind I'd better get home. Babysitting my niece.

Jane realizes that Susan has won this round, avoiding further eye contact from Susan.

JANE
Of course. Have a good evening.

Susan nods, rises, turns with a look of quiet determination, and exits.

16 INT. BOARDROOM - LEADGATE - DAY

16

Screen on wall showing banner headline from Whitebarns Courant, "LEADGATE SECRET GAS THREAT". Richard, on phone, pacing, stressed. David is sat near Richard's seat, anxiously tapping away at a laptop.

RICHARD
I've no bloody idea. We have no reliable data. No, none at all...

Enter Susan, also on phone, carrying papers, stressed.

SUSAN
I know, I know. Get something to you in the next couple of hours, best I can do

RICHARD
We'll find , we'll find out, just starting now.

SUSAN
(On phone)
I KNOW THAT JOHN! CHRIST, YOU THINK I DON'T KNOW THAT!

Enter Grace on phone, carrying notebook

GRACE

Yes, I did...well obviously, we were keeping it under..no of course I appreciate...look, I really think that's a bit harsh..look of course, and I'm really sorry you've....

Call ends, looks at her phone in horror

SUSAN

Soon as we finish John, just starting now...look, it may be nothing...

Call ends, Susan sits

RICHARD

Don't hold me to it, don't know at this stage,.. up to 300 I believe...buy them all?! Buy them all? Why the hell would we...

Listens on phone, grimacing

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Oh hell yes, we've got the calls stacking up [glances at Grace, who nods] and a couple of people in reception. No national press that I know of as yet, but I'm sure that will change. Really? Just on the basis of one rogue story?OK Alan, get you something by noon.

Richard looks round at his colleagues

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Our lords and masters are, it would appear, displeased. Guess you all have the same career limiting message?

Nods from Susan and Grace.

Richard tries to make himself a coffee from the machine, failing as usual. For a moment he considers yelling to Emily for help, before deciding he can't be bothered, muttering 'fuck it' under his breath.

Richard walks back to his seat, trying, and failing, to gather his composure.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

According to the local press we are wilfully filling our neighbours homes with poison gas, our share price is way down and falling, our head office is unable to respond to press enquiries, but we need to make an announcement to the stock exchange. We need a plan and a statement to back it up, even though we don't know anything and have nothing to say. And we need it right now otherwise Alan will, with some regret I'm sure, ritually disembowel me on the floor of the Stock Exchange. But before we start, just as a matter of polite interest, HOW THE FUCK DID THIS GET OUT?

*
*
*
*

GRACE

Apparently Holly Thomas spoke to the Courant

RICHARD

Holly? How do you know?

*

GRACE

The reporter is making no secret of it, apparently.

RICHARD

Holly? Oh God, Holly...

Looks down in momentary disbelief and distress. This disbelief quite rapidly begins to transform to anger. He looks up directly at David, who returns gaze calmly

*
*
*

RICHARD (CONT'D)

David?

*

DAVID

Not me Richard. Probably should have done, but I didn't.

RICHARD

You sure David? The do-gooder in you, didn't get the better of all that loyalty?

*
*
*

DAVID

(Calmly)
Not me Richard.

(MORE)

DAVID (CONT'D)

I have stayed silent as we agreed.
There's no reliable data as yet.

*

RICHARD

Well if not you, then.... Grace,
didn't get an attack of the
lawyer's conscience, did you?

*

*

GRACE

(Intimidated)
No, I didn't.

RICHARD

You sure, Grace? You know Holly,
nice little girly chat at the
tennis club was it?

*

*

*

GRACE

No! No! I admit I'm concerned about
Holly and that I do speak to her,
but no I wouldn't....

RICHARD

Wouldn't dare? No you're probably
right. Haven't got the spine for
it. Well, only four of us knew, it
wasn't me and it couldn't be Susan,
so...

GRACE

Oh, so it could be me or David, but
not Susan?

*

*

SUSAN

Yes. Why couldn't it be me?

RICHARD

Because you don't think she's any
good. It was you that wanted her
gone.

*

SUSAN

It's true that I didn't think much
of her. [BEAT] But it was me that
spoke to her.

*

Shocked silence around the room

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Although I never imagined she would
go to the press.

Richard looks like his has been kicked in the gut.

*

RICHARD

Susan? You of all people. Why? *

Susan, sits, and smiles ruefully to herself

SUSAN

Because fine words butter no
parsnips. *

I finally discovered a conscience, *
I guess. You more than anyone know *
how much this job means to me, know *
how hard I've worked to get here. *

You appointed me to work with you,
be your right hand , and I was so
pleased. I used to look up to you
so much. *

But it isn't like it says on the
tin. Is it Richard? I've been
pushed to do things I was too weak *
to refuse. We've released *
provisions we shouldn't have done,
played fast and loose with the
rebates, and we put David in an
impossible position.

And I've seen some of your
behaviour around women and I've
said nothing. I've watched people
reach breaking point under pressure *
from you. Including Holly. *

RICHARD

Thank you Susan. *

RICHARD, visibly broken at this point, looks towards DAVID *
and GRACE with a hope that they will take that as a signal to *
leave *

SUSAN

I'm not finished yet Richard. *
Listen, for once. *

And now we're going to say nothing *
about HUFC. We're just going to let *
it accumulate in people's houses.

DAVID

Susan, we are reinstating the *
testing.

SUSAN

Oh yeah David, you really believe that? How long before you find anything conclusive? Never, if Richard has his way.

I can't believe we aren't at least considering telling people...

Telling Holly...HUFC may cause birth defects. But you weren't going to tell her, were you Richard?

Even though she's pregnant...and it's your child....

Silence round the table.

17 INT. BOARDROOM - NINEBANKS - DAY

17

Sat at the boardroom table are William, Alan, Jane, John Miller, three other directors, and the company secretary, all facing Richard who is also sat at the boardroom table. Body language awkward from everyone. Some of the board members have papers in front of them, others with iPads.

The Company Secretary scribbles notes throughout, looking from one character to another as they speak. Sir William appears visibly disinterested, playing with his pen and trying to balance it on its end during most of the early exchange.

ALAN

(Very coolly)

So what do you propose Richard?

RICHARD

Our proposal would be to rapidly extend our testing capacity both above the tip and in the housing estate. We would tell everyone affected what we were doing.

ALAN

And compensate them?

RICHARD

If need be. I'm advised there are no legal grounds for compensation right now.

WILLIAM

People will move out. They'll have to. Like Ms. Thomas.

RICHARD

Holly is a special circumstance...

WILLIAM

Indeed she is, Richard.

RICHARD

Actually, she hasn't moved out. It's a very settled community, people like living there. And so far as we know, nobody is ill. We've thought about making an offer to buy the properties that we think could be most affected but if you offer to buy one, you'd need to offer to buy them all. And right now there are no grounds for doing so.

*
*
*

WILLIAM

Hence, presumably, in these may I say disastrous year end results the only provision you seem to be making is for increased testing costs?

RICHARD

Yes. There are no claims as yet, nothing to provide against.

WILLIAM

But there are some significant restructuring costs?

RICHARD

Yes

WILLIAM

And no clever accounting this time?

*

RICHARD

Chairman, our first half results were reported in line with accepted accounting practice.

ALAN

But your FD has resigned.

RICHARD

Yes. For personal reasons.

ALAN

As did one of your sales directors.

*

WILLIAM

The one that is apparently pregnant
with your child?

*

*

Have we calculated what it would
cost if we had to buy the whole
estate John?

*

*

*

Sir William looks towards John Miller, inviting him to speak.
Richard cuts across him.

RICHARD

We would never have to buy the
whole estate. Worst case we think
that around 120 houses could be
affected, best case zero. Average
house price is around £350k, it's
not Surrey.

John Miller again makes as if to speak. Alan cuts across him.

ALAN

So around £40m plus costs.

*

WILLIAM

And the reputational damage.

*

*

RICHARD

In my defence, I don't think I've
done anything you didn't ask me to
do. Sure, I've driven the business
hard, like you've told me to, sure
I've tried to cut costs, with some
success, and we have good plans in
place to do more. And yes, I pushed
the finance guys hard, but nothing
unacceptable, and no more than
you've done all your career Alan.
It's what you wanted me to do. Of
course I regret the business with
Holly, on many levels, but I'm not
the first CEO to do that and we all
know I won't be the last.

*

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*

ALAN

With respect, Richard, what I, what
the Board, asked you to do, was to
turn Leadgate around. And whatever
else you've done, you haven't done
that.

RICHARD

We're right on the cusp Alan,
almost there. I'd be there already
if it wasn't for...

ALAN

Holly Thomas. And the rest.

RICHARD

(Urgent, impassioned)

I know Alan, but all this has
nothing to do with the real
business performance. It's legacy.
Give me time, a year, 12 months to
finish the job. And if I fail, I'll
go. No pay off. Just go.

RICHARD gathers himself

RICHARD (CONT'D)

I appreciate, of course, that my
future lies in your hands and that
the situation is far from ideal. I
would though very much like the
chance to put it right.

*

Silence around the table

ALAN

Anything else, Richard?

*

RICHARD

I think that's all Alan.

ALAN

Thanks Richard. We'll be in touch.

*

Richard exits.

*

The pen, that William finally succeeded to balance, topples
over as Richard exits. William returns to the pen to his
pocket as he re-engages with the group.

*

*

*

WILLIAM

He'll have to go Alan.

ALAN

You don't think we do more harm
that way?

WILLIAM

The shareholders expect it, so do
the markets. And so do I. If it's
not him, it's you. And him.

ALAN

Jane? You're the one who got to this.

JANE

But not in time and not from the right direction. Funnily enough I have some sympathy with him. I think he was doing what you wanted him to do in the only way he knew how.

ALAN

I didn't expect him to go around impregnating the staff.

JANE

No, but you knew what he is and chose to prefer the good in him over the bad.

*

ALAN

Up to a point. But the environmental issue isn't his fault. Wrong time, wrong place.

JANE

It's not clear that there is an environmental issue. I think there's a case for saying the environmentals have been handled quite well down the years. And the manager, David Blackett, hasn't resigned. He wants to see it through.

*

*

*

ALAN

Not if he's going to go off on his own track. A lot of this mess is his fault.

JANE

Unless he's proved right of course.

WILLIAM

That's for the future. For now, Richard has to go, agreed?

*

Sir William looks around to the other directors for nodded assent.

*

*

He then gets up, noticing that one of his awards in the cabinet is a little out of a place. He attempts to fix this during his next line

*

*

*

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

One thing you'll realise, Jane, now you're working in a truly global business like Ninebanks, is the need to keep perspective and focus. There's always noise, the trick is not to let yourself be distracted.

*

*

ALAN

It leaves the business in a hell of a mess.

WILLIAM

That's your job to fix, Alan.

JANE

It's not so bad. Put in an interim CEO, strip out the environmental, and sell it. The brands are still strong, somebody will buy the market position. It's not core to Ninebanks.

WILLIAM

Alan, it's for you to bring that to the board, with any other alternatives but I'm inclined to agree with Jane. In the meantime, can you please arrange for Richard to leave forthwith. Get me a statement I can release this afternoon. I know he's your protege, but he has to go. And in my view we should fire the bloody Blackett fellow too, going off on his own like that. And don't forget Project Bertrand, for Christs sake Alan. Get it done, please.

*

*

*

*

*

Sir William returns to his seat.

*

ALAN

Yes, Chairman.

JANE

One more thing before we close.

WILLIAM

(Testy)
Yes, Jane.

JANE

Nothing was ever proved against Richard.

(MORE)

JANE (CONT'D)

The accounting passed audit. The change to the environmental testing was clumsy but understandable. No harassment claim was ever substantiated. But....

*
*
*
*

We could have got to this earlier. Back in the Speak Up files are two complaints dating back more than 18 months. And there was a third that that I can't find, sent directly to you, Alan.

ALAN

It was anonymous. Nothing I could do. And I had other priorities, like Bertrand. That kind of stuff sometimes has to wait.

JANE

"That kind of stuff"?!

*

JANE gives ALAN a withering look

*

JANE (CONT'D)

I think I know who sent the complaints. Susan. Before Richard solved the problem by promoting her to FD and switching his attentions to Holly Thomas. There were others complaints from earlier too. Holly set me off looking for them.

*
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*

But they were never investigated.

JANE looks round the room. The Directors in the room avoid making eye contact with Jane.

*
*

JANE (CONT'D)

And why not?

*

Looks directly at William

JANE (CONT'D)

Because you didn't want to know....

*

VARIOUS TIME LAPSE VIGNETTES - EVENTS PASSING OVER THE NEXT 2 YEARS

- 18A INT. WAREHOUSE - LEADGATE - DAY 18A *
- Richard walks through an almost empty warehouse. He stops and looks around with regret and sadness. He sees a sole warehouse worker (WAREHOUSE #1 from the opening scene). Their eyes meet for a moment, and there is a look of sadness and disappointment in both of their eyes. Richard then walks on, signs out, and leaves his company badge next to the sign-in sheet *
- 18B INT. LOCAL TV NEWS STUDIO - DAY 18B *
- A local TV news presenter is introducing the story of Leadgate being sold to US Herlton Capital *
- 18C EXT. OUTSIDE LEADGATE - DAY 18C *
- An outside news reporter continues the report about Leadgate being sold *
- 18D INT. BOARDROOM - NINEBANKS - DAY 18D *
- Jane and Sir William standing in Ninebanks boardroom next to empty table where the mementos have disappeared. Jane offers to shake hands, Sir William refuses and stalks away. *
- 18E INT. OUTSIDE BOARDROOM - NINEBANKS - DAY 18E *
- Shot Of visibly distressed Kat saying goodbye to Sir William outside the lift. *
- 18F INT. LIFT - NINEBANKS - DAY 18F *
- Lift opens to show shot of city behind, then closes on Sir William looking out. *
- 18G EXT. OUTSIDE NINEBANKS - DAY 18G *
- Shot of Sir William getting into black cab. *
- 18H INT. OUTSIDE BOARDROOM - NINEBANKS - DAY 18H *
- Alan and Jane standing outside lift, shake hands, Alan smiles ruefully and turns away carrying two suitcases. John Miller appears in background carrying cardboard box. Says nothing but waits for next lift. *

18I INT. BOARDROOM - NINEBANKS - DAY 18I *

Jane sitting at table in Boardroom, view of London behind her looking at business news headline on laptop. "Sir William Brown follows Gower out of the door at Ninebanks. CFO Miller also goes in huge shakeup." Sits back, blows out her cheeks. Has she bitten off too much?

VIGNETTES BELOW WILL BE ADDED INTO SCENE 19 DURING SUSAN'S MONOLOGUE AT THE APPROPRIATE PLACES IN SCRIPT. APPLICABLE SCENE 19 DIALOGUE WILL BE USED AS VOICEOVER WITH VIGNETTES BELOW SHOWN AS VISUALS *

18J EXT. HOLLY'S HOUSE - MODERN HOUSING ESTATE - DAY 18J *

Richard pulls up in Porsche outside Holly's house. Greeted with a kiss by Holly with a pushchair. *

18K INT. VILLAGE HALL - DAY 18K *

David, in sparsely attended village hall, with map of LGE on screen, talking ineffectively to a crowd of bored people

19A INT. BOARDROOM - NINEBANKS - DAY 19A *

Susan sitting at ease at the small table in the boardroom. Looking at iPad where there is a news item, "Jane Perrin, Chair of Ninebanks, mooted to head up Government think tank on ESG." Susan laughs then looks up as Jane enters the room. Susan stands, they shake hands and then sit. *

JANE

Susan, nice to see you. Something amusing you?

SUSAN

Thanks, nice to see you too. I see you are to head up the Government's thinking on ESG!! *

Susan smiles and Jane smiles in return. *

JANE

Don't believe everything you read.

SUSAN

Not true then?

Jane looks away and dodges the question

JANE

I heard you were leaving. Wanted the chance to wish you well before you left. A big job, I hear.

*
*

SUSAN

Yes. A big challenge, first board level post. Looking forward to it.

JANE

You'll be fine, I'm sure.

SUSAN

Thanks. And look, for the record Jane...I'm very grateful to you for giving me the chance at Ninebanks after what happened at Leadgate.

*
*

JANE

At the very least I thought you deserved the opportunity.

*

SUSAN

(Reflective)

Biggest learning experience of my life...

*

JANE

Same for me.

*

SUSAN

Tell me, did you always plan to become Chair of Ninebanks?

*

JANE

Goodness, no. I was just looking to develop my portfolio, I wasn't looking for a Boardroom fight at all.

SUSAN

Maybe not how it appeared..

*

JANE

I know. Initially I felt really bad about not acting quickly enough to prevent what happened at Leadgate. I still do.

SUSAN

Me too.

*

JANE

I realised pretty quickly, partly thanks to you, that there was a lot more than that wrong and that I either had to tackle it or fail.

*

SUSAN

It worked out well for you though.

JANE

Not really. It became clear that William was obsessed with his vanity project and ignoring everything else. Alan was trying to steer a balanced course but with no support from Miller, the CFO, who, as I'm sure you realised was Sir Williams appointment, it was pretty tough for him. In the end I couldn't move fast enough to save him. William wouldn't listen to me at all, I was just a bit of window dressing. So I had to find a way to get to the Shareholders and get him out. It was all pretty brutal. Not sure how welcome I'll be in the next boardroom...

*

*

Pause

SUSAN

If you tell people the story I'm sure they'll understand. The people who know how the game is played.

*

*

*

JANE

What game?

*

SUSAN

I hadn't seen it until I came here. The one where the great and a good laugh at us little people grinding away while they share out the spoils - the chairmanships and titles and gongs.

*

*

*

*

*

*

JANE

Not me. I don't see myself like that at all!

*

*

SUSAN

(Amused)

No? Not another Sir William?

*

(MORE)

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Maybe you should start to worry
about what you might become.

*

Pause. Jane looks at Susan perplexed

SUSAN (CONT'D)

When I was at college, I dated this
guy for a while. He always used to
quote this American physicist -
could never remember his name - but
what this guy said was "the first
principle is that you must not fool
yourself - and you're the easiest
person to fool". I don't know much
about science but that's pretty
interesting don't you think? [BEAT]
Don't forget Jane it was me who
actually exposed what was happening
at Leadgate, not you.. You bottled
it.

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*

Pause.

Enter PETER, smartly dressed, early thirties, who serves
coffee and water.

*

JANE

(Absently)

Thanks Peter.

SUSAN

Yes, thanks Peter.

*

An awkward pause while coffee and water is poured and sipped.

*

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Anyway, for me, it feels like it's
working out better than I deserve.
So far..

JANE

And the others?

*

SUSAN

Holly never did move out of Lime
Glade Estate. Instead Richard moved
in after Ninebanks fired him. Took
a while but eventually he found a
new job heading up a local building
products company.

I feel a bit for Richard in a way.
He's a good guy at heart, and a
good businessman.

*
*
*

(MORE)

SUSAN (CONT'D)

It just all got too toxic, in the end. That's why I made the anonymous calls. I knew other calls had been made too. I wanted someone independent to call him out.. It nearly worked.

*
*
*

Did you know about his divorce? It was a while back but I think it affected him quite badly.

*

Knowing what I know now, I'd have dealt with it differently. If I hadn't been quite so precious about my career. So concerned about the consequences. But that's easy to say now...

*
*
*
*
*
*

But I'm glad I told Holly. Even Richard was grateful for that in the end. The baby's fine, by the way.

*
*
*

We made offers to buy the houses of anyone who wanted to move out, not many did. Preferred to wait until we had the test results. They trusted us. Luckily they were right. Not only did we find almost no HUFC, we found that there was no leak from the quarry at all. Way back when, we had done everything right after all.

*
*
*
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*

And David. The crusading environmentalist with a conscience? He transferred to the new owners, but didn't stay long. Got a package to go, then tried to advertise himself as the whistleblower that saved Lime Glade Estate. I don't think that's going too well..

*
*
*
*
*

And me? You appointed me compliance officer at Ninebanks, moved me to London. Now, soon to be FD of an AIM listed software engineer. My Mum's very proud...

JANE

Oh. I didn't realise it was only AIM. Still, it's quite a story. One for business school one day.

Susan laughs.

SUSAN

Only Aim? Oh Jane, it's a big deal
for me you know.

JANE

Sorry. I didn't mean to say it like
that.

Jane looks at Susan and slowly shakes her head, as if
surprised at her own insensitivity. *

Susan, rises, composed and with authority, taking Jane a
little by surprise. Jane also rises and silently,
uncomfortably, they shake hands.

SUSAN

Jane? Do you remember when you
visited me at Leadgate, and I asked
you what you were? *

JANE

Yes.

SUSAN

The question still stands. *

Susan turns and walks purposefully towards the door, without
a backward glance.

19B INT. OUTSIDE BOARDROOM - NINEBANKS - DAY 19B *

We follow Susan as she continues to work positively and
purposely to the lift

19C INT. LIFT - NINEBANKS - DAY 19C *

We see Susan descend down the lift looking out at the city

19D EXT. OUTSIDE NINEBANKS - DAY 19D *

We see Susan 'stepping out' into her new life as she leaves
the Ninebanks offices.

We slowly pull away from a close-up of Susan to expose the
city of London as a TITLE CARD fades in; *

"Courage isn't simply one of the virtues, but the form of every virtue at the testing point" C.S. Lewis

*
*

FADE TO BLACK.

*

END OF FILM