

CONSULTANTS

A SHORT FILM

By

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FADE IN:

S01

INT. HOME - MORNING

Alarms go off simultaneously. Curled up in a fetus position, Milicent reluctantly gets up. With eyes still closed, she enters the bathroom and grabs the electric toothbrush on the way into the shower.

She puts her suit on and blow-dries her hair while reading news on the Internet.

MILICENT (V.O.)

My name is Milicent Smart. The average burnout age of an IT consultant is 29. I'm 29 years old. I manage time efficiently. I multi-task and cook 3-minute instant noodles in 2 minutes. I often dream solutions. I communicate well and finish other people's sentences. I have a photographic memory.

Milicent applies makeup in front of the mirror.

MILICENT CONT'D (V.O.)

I design, develop, troubleshoot and work overnights. I only go to the bathroom once a day; and THAT'S how I meet deadlines. When I finish a project, I move on to a new company. I rarely deal with the same people again.

Milicent grabs an Oh-Henry bar from the lifetime supply stacked in the fridge. The rest of the fridge is taken up by coke bottles.

MILICENT CONT'D (V.O.)

I'm the president of a consulting company. I am a consultant: an independent IT consultant.

Milicent steps out of her apartment.

CUT TO:

S02

INT. CUBICLE - MORNING

Milicent steps into the office (matching shot) and enters her cubicle with a box of donuts. We see a few colleagues.

MILICENT CONT'D (V.O.)

My colleagues come from different backgrounds but we share one thing in

common: an unfriendly cubicle with no doors, no windows and no privacy.

Milicent passes the donut box to TOMMY(32, Chinese), laughing hysterically for unknown reasons. Freeze frame.

Text typing on screen:

Tommy Lee,
190lbs,
5'11",
Pass time: piloting single engine Cessnas.

MILICENT CONT'D (V.O.)

But it's a noble profession. (beat)
Over-worked, over-paid and emotionally unstable, Tommy is one of 267 Chinese working in this building.

(Jump cuts to Asians everywhere in the company.)

Release frame. Tommy takes a donut and passes the box to VENKATA(33, Indian from India), who is trying to explain something behind someone's back - Freeze frame.

Text typing on screen:

Venkata Sivaramakrishnan
165lbs,
5'9",
Pass time: salaah.

MILICENT CONT'D (V.O.)

Nobody really understands Ven. And no management will admit that he's here because they can pay him a fraction of what they pay us.

Release frame. Ven does not have a chance to grab a donut... Cut to the back of TED (25, tight shirt). He turns around. Freeze frame.

Text typing on screen:

Ted Hébert
170lbs,
5'11",
Pass time: fashion.

MILICENT CONT'D (V.O.)

Ted is the newbie - junior consultant. He's just a cute Ted Hébert (say Teddy Bear). Technically incompetent. Very talented in other areas.

Release frame. Ted takes two donuts and then passes the donut box to MONICA(42, happily overweight), who is already

eating her egg mcMuffin. Freeze frame.

Text typing on screen:
Monica Belletini
150lb,
5'5",
Pass time: gastronomy.

MILICENT CONT'D (V.O.)
Monica's the best consultant in the industry, after me of course. Although, she might be the only person who understands Ven. She's sassy; she's loud; but when she says yes, nobody dares say no.

Release frame.

MILICENT CONT'D (V.O.)
Well, except...

Monica takes a donut before JEAN-PAUL(42, nice suit, over enthusiastic, tries to be popular) arrives at her desk to steal one. He speaks to everybody from behind the cubicle wall.

JEAN-PAUL
(strong entrance) Good MORNING everybody!

Freeze frame.

MILICENT CONT'D (V.O.)
We report to Jean-Paul. He is the only one with a real office. If he did anything right, he hired me.

CUT TO:

THREE MONTHS EARLIER

S03

INT. INTERVIEW OFFICE.
Jean-Paul is looking over Milicent's impressive CV. Then he starts. (Page peel in accelerated fashion)

JEAN-PAUL
What's your hourly rate?

PAGE PEEL:

JEAN-PAUL
Do you have kids?

PAGE PEEL:

JEAN-PAUL
Any dependents?

PAGE PEEL:

JEAN-PAUL
Chronic disease?

PAGE PEEL:

JEAN-PAUL
Are you pregnant?

PAGE PEEL:

JEAN-PAUL
Are you gonna be pregnant?

PAGE PEEL:

JEAN-PAUL
What are you doing this afternoon?

CUT TO:

JEAN-PAUL
Great. You'll be working your ass off.

CUT TO:

S04

INT. CUBICLE - Morning

Milicent is reading one of 17 specifications on her desk. She turns around and studies her environment. Tommy is chatting on MSN. Ted the newbie is surfing the web with his own laptop. His other computer's wallpaper is Anna Kournikova. Ven is praying. Monica is eating Egg McMuffin. Footsteps. A pair of red high heels. Legs. Short skirt and a see-thru top. An attractive employee walks towards Jean-Paul and starts whispering to his ear. They laugh aloud. Milicent returns to her reading material.

Ted's wallpaper:



SIX MONTHS LATER

CUT TO:

S05

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - AFTERNOON

Milicent gets everyone to go to the conference room. When everyone is in, she turns off her cell phone and places it on the table. Everybody does the same.

MILICENT

Peer review for my bolt-on design. I expect only positive comments.

Milicent starts her Powerpoint presentation. Now fast forward the (inaudible) slide show for 20 minutes. Then bring the tempo back to normal. Stop at a slide with technical drawings.

MILICENT

Really? You think her lips are real?

TOMMY

Oh yeah.

TED THE NEWBIE

No way man.

TOMMY

Why? Just because it's nice it's automatically a job?

TED THE NEWBIE

Like boobs - you can tell if they're moving.

MONICA

It's the bra! It's the fuck'n bra.

TED THE NEWBIE

Breast or brain. Can't have it all.

TOMMY

By the way, clients have complaint about our use of obscene materials in the office. A heads-up for you Ted...

TED THE NEWBIE

(protests) But she's my favourite tennis player!

TOMMY

Oh one more thing... Blogging can be ground for dismissal.

TED THE NEWBIE

What is blogging?

MILICENT

(Fake cough) The table over here will be the parent of this one, which in turn will be the parent of that table. I will make these two unique and this one duplicate.

VENKATA

(Incomprehensible)

Reaction shots. Everyone is guessing. Monica is taking a bite of her egg McMuffin.

MONICA

He asked you which of the fields are the common keys in those tables.

MILICENT

The...

Jean-Paul walks in and interrupts the meeting with a box of chocolate bars.

JEAN-PAUL

Everybody, my daughter's selling these. Three bucks each.

MONICA

We just bought some last week.

JEAN-PAUL

Those were for girl scouts.

Jean-Paul collects the money and walks out.

JEAN-PAUL

(collects) Thanks! Thank you.

CUT TO:

S06

INT. CUBICLE - AFTERNOON

Milicent helps Ted the newbie to debug his code.
New wallpaper: Jamie Salé.



MILICENT

(Calmly and arrogantly) If you've even thought about it, you'd know that data is orphaned. Just verify by checking the parent. (typing) Zero rows found of course. (typing) Easy, put the child table in the nested level.

TED THE NEWBIE

(whispering?) And how do you do that?

MILICENT

Are you serious? (uses the mouse to show him how to do it)

TED THE NEWBIE

OK.

MILICENT

Anything else?

TED THE NEWBIE

Yeah. (typing) What's the problem here.

MILICENT

(beat) How'd you get this job? This is a no brainer. (continue to explain)

CUT TO:

S07

INT. BEDROOM - EVENING

ECU - Milicent day-dreaming.

MILICENT (V.O.)

(Arrogantly) Corporate people are frightened people. They make up these rules about what others should or shouldn't do. Things like, thou shall not share passwords. Thou shall not document source codes. Thou shall not involve in office romance.

(Her voice starts to loosen up)

In my opinion, there's no such thing as professionalism. Everybody is entitled to certain degree of freedom. After all, consultants are humans too.

(panting)

Heck, you can get away with just about anything if enough people believe in you. Why wouldn't they? I am doing such a remarkable job.

(Her voice changes into uncontrollable utters)

Besides, falling in lust isn't exactly a crime. On the other hand, turning down an insurmountable orgasm is (panting) criminal and (vibrating) unpardonable (echo)!!!!!!!!!!

Camera pulls back to review Ted the newbie half way under the cover.

CUT TO:

THREE MONTHS LATER

S08

INT. CUBICLE - MIDNIGHT

Ted the newbie and Monica are the only ones left in the office.

MONICA

Good weekend.

TED THE NEWBIE

Thanks!

CUT TO:

S09

EXT. SMOKING AREA. AFTERNOON

Tommy notices that Ted the newbie has been socializing with other employees lately.

TOMMY

What's up with him lately?

MILICENT (V.O.)

I wonder if he is talking about 'in' or 'outside' the office... either way,

MILICENT

It's none of your business.

TOMMY

Your sex life no longer concerns me but this guy is suspicious.

MILICENT (V.O.)

Is it because we're no longer together? Or is it the fact that I make more than him now. In any case,

MILICENT

You're just jealous.

TOMMY

(laugh) Look, he's been so friendly with employees we don't even work with. This guy's after something. Just watch...

MILICENT

You're crazy.

BLACK OUT:

White text on screen:
Symphony of the cubicle.

S10

INT. CUBICLE - NIGHT

FADE IN:

Jazz.

Cut to Tommy.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

An Indian female voice.

Cut to Venkata.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

Electronic.

Cut to Milicent

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

Cuban.

Cut to Ted.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

Classical opera.

Cut to Monica.

FADE OUT:

Now intercut the music (and the cubicle people) - first with 2, then 3 and gradually all of the above - creating a symphony of cubicle music.

Suddenly, the music (and work harmony) is disrupted by rap music. Cut to Jean-Paul. All music halts.

CUT TO:

S11

INT. JEAN-PAUL'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Milicent is called to Jean-Paul's office thinking it will be a 'good-job-keep-it-up' session.

JEAN-PAUL

It's been nice working with you, Milicent. Effective immediately, your contract has been terminated.

MILICENT

(Denial and disbelief)

JEAN-PAUL

Production data has been tampered with. An employee received a juicy bonus. Some got insurance policy upgraded. Subscribers have effective dates modified. Et cetera.

MILICENT

And what does that have to do with me?

JEAN-PAUL

Well, you've been logging in repeatedly for the past few weeks.

MILICENT

But that could be any of us. Why would I want to give someone else a bonus anyway?

JEAN-PAUL

I don't care if you did it or not. Maybe you shouldn't have shared your password. Mayb...

JEAN-PAUL (CONT'D)

Look, the client is not going to pursue legal actions. As a cautionary measure, your contract has been terminated. I wish you best of luck.

CUT TO:

12 HOURS LATER

S12

INT. BEDROOM - POST COITAL

I wish you best of luck (echo) I wish you best of luck
(echo) I wish you best of luck

Ted the newbie lights a cigarette for Milicent.
He breaks the cigarette-long silence.

TED THE NEWBIE
You left in bad terms. We shouldn't see
each other anymore.

MILICENT
(Denial and disbelief)

TED THE NEWBIE
In case anyone thinks I have anything to
do with it.

MILICENT (V.O.)
What? It's not like anyone ever saw us
anyway.

TED THE NEWBIE
(beat) I like you.

MILICENT (V.O.)
Just what the hell's going oooooon?

TED THE NEWBIE
Sorry I have to end it.

MILICENT (V.O.)
I'm sorry but nobody, I mean, NOBODY
dumps me.

TED
(beat) I just did.

CUT TO:

S13

INT. GYM - MORNING
Milicent on the bike.

I just did. (echo) I just did. (echo) I just did.

Milicent on the stairmaster.

I just did. (echo) I just did. (echo) I just did.

Milicent on the treadmill.

I just did. (echo) I just did. (echo) I just did.

MILICENT
Shut up!!

The gym people look at her funny, and then return to their activities. After all, the gym is a place to let off steam...

CUT TO:

S14

INT. HOME - Sleepless night
Milicent gets up in the middle of the night to cook instant noodles.

MILICENT (V.O.)
Note to self: when things go wrong, go for noodles.

Milicent smokes.

MILICENT (V.O.)
Weed.

Milicent drinks.

MILICENT (V.O.)
Alcohol.

Milicent sniffs powder.

MILICENT (V.O.)
Discover new territory.

CUT TO:

S15

INT. SHRINK'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON
Milicent is lying on the chair.

MILICENT
It's not my problem. Is it?

THERAPIST
Do you think it is your problem?

MILICENT
It's not my problem. It's their problem! Isn't it?

THERAPIST
Maybe it's their problem. What do you think?

MILICENT
Just what the hell's going wrong?

THERAPIST
That's the right question. What is
going wrong?

MILICENT
Am I getting better, Doc?

THERAPIST
Are you feeling better, Milicent?

Alarm goes off.

TWO WEEKS LATER

CUT TO:

S16a

INT. PARK - Sleepless night
Milicent takes a walk in the park.

MILICENT (V.O.)
Then, on that moon lit night.

Moonlight sonata.

Milicent is sitting on a bench in a park.

ECU her eyes suddenly open (an eye opening
experience).

MILICENT (V.O.)
There I had it! An epiphany! There's
the source of all problems.

Jean-Paul fires her. Milicent screams

MILICENT
Man!

Ted the newbie dumps her. Milicent screams

MILICENT
Man!

S16b

Milicent's teacher slabs her hand with a ruler.
(PRL: we could use TOMMY instead)

MILICENT
Men! Men! Men!

OJ Simpson!

George Bush!
Adolf Hitler!
King Kong!

Beat.

MILICENT (V.O.)
(Sigh) Then I saw women...

Eve...
Witch...
Cinderella's mother...
Madison Lee (Demi Moore) in Charlie's Angle II...

MILICENT (V.O.)
More women...

Ann Fisher...
Monica Lewinski...
Milicent Smart...
Mom...

MILICENT (V.O.)
Right here...

Rewind back to Milicent Smart.

Freeze.

MILICENT (V.O.)
It dawned on me. Gender had nothing to do with it. Nothing else. The source of misery came from within. I was the problem. I might be competent. I might be sharp.

Milicent sleeps with Ted the newbie. She gives him her password. She talks behind people's back. She looks down on people.

MILICENT (V.O.)
(sad) But I was heartless. I was nothing more than an unprofessional, selfish, arrogant bitch.

Milicent closes her eyes.

MILICENT (V.O.)
(hopeful) Then I realized how lucky I had been. All these years of ignorance and self-indulgence, I could have been dead.

S16c

Milicent is strangled, beat up and shot by a crazy

bastard.

MILICENT (V.O.)
(resolute) But it wasn't too late.

Milicent gets up and gives the beggar a dollar.
She gives him a five-dollar bill, then a 20-dollar
bill.

s16d
(She takes him to a restaurant.)

CUT TO:

s17a
INT. SPACIOUS ROOM - MORNING
Milicent learns calligraphy.

MILICENT (V.O.)
Be humble.

A new language.

MILICENT
Arigatou gozaimasu.

s17b
Martial arts.

MILICENT
Watcha!

s17c
INT. ATWATER MARKET - SUNNY AFTERNOON
Milicent buys flowers.

MILICENT
(Smile) Keep the change!

s17d
INT. HOME - SUNNY AFTERNOON
She gets home and replaces Oh-Henry and Coke with
groceries.

MILICENT (V.O.)
Practice random acts of kindness.

Milicent cooks and serves dinner for her parents.

s17e
INT. HOME - NIGHT
Milicent practices Yoga meditation.

MILICENT (V.O.)

Road to self-redemption.

FOUR MORE WEEKS LATER

S18

Milicent participates in the End Breast Cancer walk. (PRL: perhaps the walk is not necessary) As she walks, cut to flashback:

Ted the newbie uses her password. Ted the newbie is socializing with other employees. Jean-Paul fires Milicent. Ted the newbie ends the affair.

Cut back to present, ECU Milicent's eyes: she comes up with another revelation.

MILICENT (V.O.)
Justice ought to be executed.

CUT TO:

S19

INT. BAR - NIGHT
Milicent takes Jean-Paul out for a drink. Bla bla bla.

MILICENT
No, seriously. You were right. I was wrong.

JEAN-PAUL
Stop beating around the bush. Whatever you have to say, make it quick.

MILICENT
I know who is responsible (for the crime).

JEAN-PAUL
No one is complaining now. Everything is fine.

Jean-Paul takes a cigarette puff and gives it some more thoughts.

JEAN-PAUL
Do you have proof?

DISSOLVE TO:

S20

INT. SMOKING AREA - AFTERNOON
Ted the newbie is 'socializing' again with an employee. (no dialogues)

CUT TO:

S21

INT. OFFICE - NIGHT

Milicent returns to the office and sets up the program to trap him.

CUT TO:

S22

INT. OFFICE - NIGHT

Ted the newbie has the opportunity to commit another act of crime.

JEAN-PAUL

Keep up the good work, Ted!

TED THE NEWBIE

Thanks boss.

Ted the newbie looks around and finds no one.
ECU: Should he do it again?

Camera changes focus from him to the hidden camera behind.

In a closed office, Milicent monitors the images captured by the hidden camera. The computer is connected to the database and the server so that whatever Ted the newbie is doing, it is also captured on this screen.

CUT TO:

S23

INT. OFFICE - NIGHT

Ted the newbie walks out and two police officers stop him. (no dialogues)

WHITE DISSOLVE TO:

S24

INT. OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Milicent enters the office with a box of donuts. She passes it to Tommy.

MILICENT (V.O.)

I got back to work the next morning.
Nothing has changed.

Tommy grabs a donut and passes the box to Venkata. Venkata now has plenty of time to take a donut before passing the box to Monica.

MILICENT (V.O.)

(beat) Yet nothing was the same.

Milicent takes a look at Ted the newbie's empty desk.

MILICENT (V.O.)
Every time I stared at that screen, I
felt a sudden wave of unexpected guilt.

She turns to Tommy. He smiles back.

MILICENT (V.O.)
That guilt soon went away and was
replaced by the reminder of a few
lessons learned.

Milicent puts on her earpiece. Now intercut music
(and the cubicle people) similar to earlier scene
(S10). Now cut to Jean-Paul's electronic
component - a symphonic harmony in the work place.

MILICENT (V.O.)
In the end, we met the deadline: the
product was launched and everyone moved
on. I started my next contract in
Belgium and never quite saw them again.
(beat) Life of a consultant, get used to
it...

Credits.
NG shots on the side.

THE END